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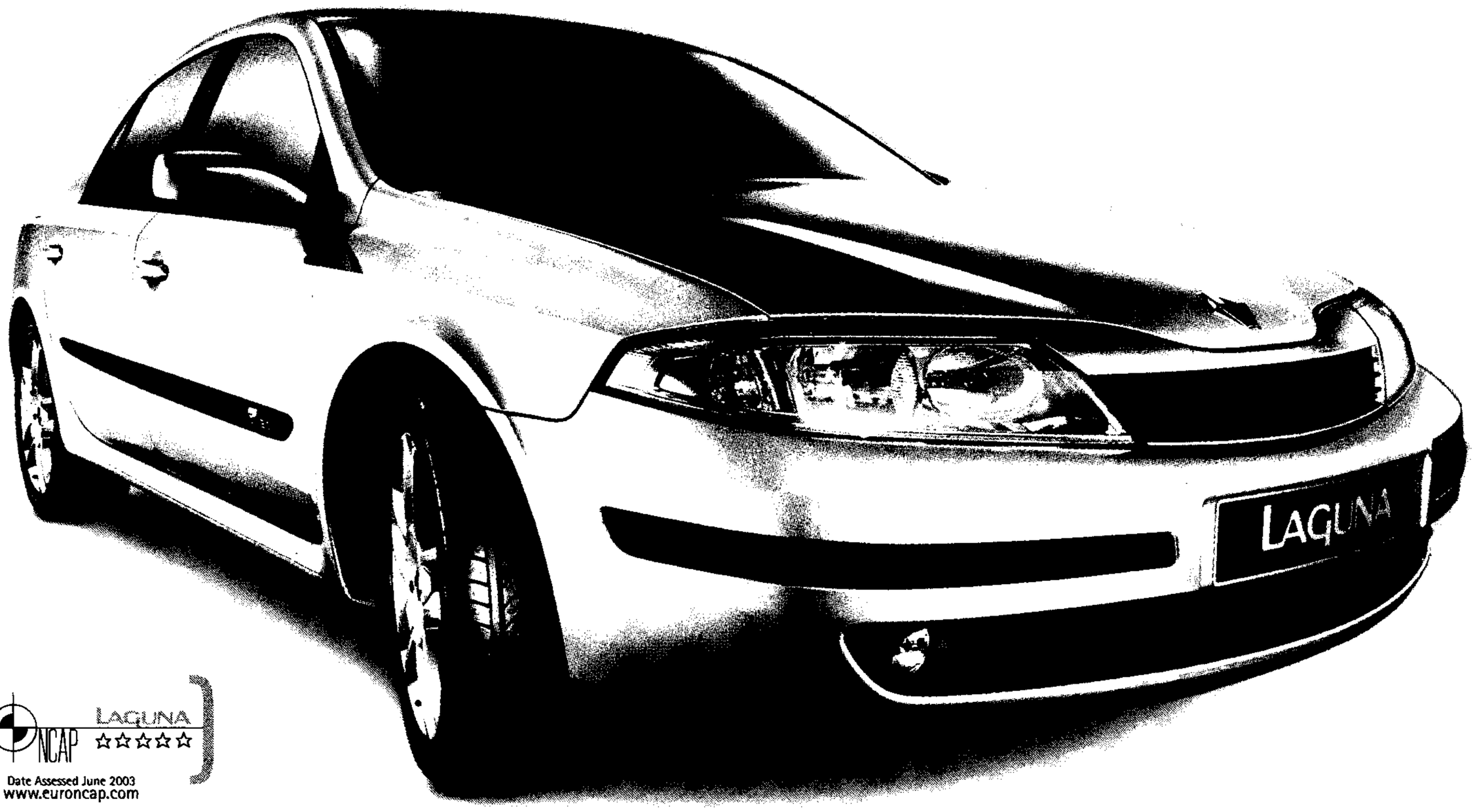

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ABC

On and on... and on!

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AS THE comrades gathered in Bournemouth, Alan Milburn, who resigned as health secretary to spend more time with his family, and former transport disaster Stephen Byers made a surprise return to the airwaves and TV screens.

They were acting as licensed critics of the government, helpfully suggesting that the Dear Leader should be doing a little more listening – knowing of course that Tony Blair intends to relaunch himself as the "listening leader".

The return of Milburn and Byers, both friends of the Dear Leader, was helpful to the leadership because it ensured that the awkward squad barely got a look-in as the conference opened and Byers moved from studio to studio.

The idea of launching Milburn and Byers on the public was the brainchild of Peter Mandelson, who by the weekend was ensconced in the main conference hotel – the Highcliffe – masterminding the Blair fightback. Also central to Mandy's strategy is the plan to depict the unruly public sector unions as "wreckers". With party chairman Ian McCartney telling hacks that "Tony Blair will not be turning back", the ghost of a non-U turning Maggie hovered heavily over conference.

5.15 The Weakest Link; Party Conference Broadcast. By the Labour Party. 5913265
6.05 Get a New Life (R) 245197

Northern Echo

IF ALL had gone according to plan, the Tory conference would have been preceded by a Channel 4 documentary displaying the warmth and decency of Iain Duncan Smith.

IDS was certainly keen on the idea. So was his new "strategy director" Paul Baverstock, who thought floating voters would be won round if they could see the man behind the cough – drinking tea with pensioners, opening village fetes, chatting to schoolchildren, etc.

A contract was signed in April, with filming due in the summer. IDS's only condition was that his own children should be kept out of it; but he was happy to permit a few heart-warming glimpses of Betsy Duncan Smith accompanying her husband at official events.

Alas! He forgot to check with Betsy – and when he did finally tell her, she vetoed the entire project. IDS then decided to pretend that he too had been against it all along, berating Central Office staff for having anything to do with the reptiles of C4. "I'm not filming with those scum!" he raved.

All of which has left IDS's aides more miserable and embarrassed than ever. How can they endear him to the British public if he won't even appear in a sympathetic TV documentary? Worse still, news of the fiasco has reached Duncan Smith's arch-rival David Davis MP, whose supporters are now energetically leaking the story as further proof that the Quiet Man should make way for a Noisy Man without delay.

THE lengths to which arms company BAE went to spy on anti-arms campaigners – employing investigators to plant moles as volunteers at Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) – were revealed last month in a *Sunday Times* article.

Staff at CAAT's London office report that what the BAE spies are likely to have discovered is: "We don't answer the phones between 1 and 2, because we all sit down and have lunch together - always the same thing: cheese, bread, olives, vegetarian pate, tomatoes and on a good day avocados – every day, always from the same shop."

Meanwhile things CAAT has learned about BAE include the fact that it manufactured RDX and explosives used by the US, which could have ended up in anti-personnel landmines. CAAT also has sizeable files on the various corruption allegations against BAE Systems from around the world, including the revelation last month that in 2001 the Serious Fraud Office passed on concerns about a BAE slush fund in Saudi Arabia to the MoD's fraud squad. BAE denies the claims, but they were never fully investigated by the MoD.

THE acrimonious divorce being played out in the courts between John Prescott and the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) is casting an unflattering light into the murky recesses of the deputy prime minister's brain (*Eyes passim*).

Although Prescott has long told anyone who will listen that he gave the best years of his life to the RMT (in its former incarnation as the Seamen's Union), it looks as if time is taking its toll on his judgement. He is determined to cling on to a flat in Clapham he has rented from the RMT on a peppercorn rent for 33 years, regardless of the fact that: he does not live there; he has three other homes; he has been offered alternative accommodation by the RMT; by moving he would allow a redevelopment of affordable housing to go ahead – in line with the official policy of, er, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The RMT had hoped to be granted outright possession of the flat at a hearing at Wandsworth county court after Prescott failed to respond to a notice to quit which expired on 20 June. But Her Honour Judge Knowles ruled that the case should be adjourned until next year to give Prescott more time to come up with reasons he should not be evicted from a property he does not live in.

RMT officials, previously baffled at Prescott's behaviour, are now becoming angry, as it becomes increasingly clear that the DPM is dragging his feet purely to spite the union. The longer the case drags on, the more the strain on the finances of the RMT, which has already spent thousands on m'learned friends in its attempt to evict its mulish tenant.

"He's just like Maggie – everyone hates him and can't wait to dump him"

NEWS

HOME SECRETARY David Blunkett has intervened to stop the Metropolitan police wasting yet more taxpayers' millions in pursuit of Iranian police superintendent Ali Dizaei.

Blunkett wants to cut a deal which will see all disciplinary charges against Dizaei dropped in return for his resignation.

Dizaei, the country's most senior Asian officer, was the object of a crazy, multi-million pound corruption investigation which produced no evidence of criminal behaviour but did enhance Knacker's reputation for "institutional racism".

That the case was not stopped earlier was possibly because of claims that Dizaei posed a threat to national security. What the threat was, no one knows; and thanks to public interest immunity, we never will. But the Met went on a massive fishing exercise, bugging, filming and trailing the officer. At one stage the Canadian mounties, American FBI and MI5 were involved.

After crawling over his life, all police managed to "convict" him of was having a racy love life. A final criminal charge of fiddling £200 on his expenses was dropped after it was realised that the Met owed him about £4,000 in unclaimed expenses.

Why, when the four-year inquiry into such serious allegations as breaching national security and drug dealing had crumbled, did the Crown Prosecution Service charge Dizaei with attempting to pervert the course of justice over the positioning of his damaged car, remains unclear. That the vandalism may have been the result of racism *is* clear, however: another officer associated with the Black Police Association had his car damaged that day and a third received hate mail.

Many of the lurid allegations against Dizaei were based on nonsensical straws in the wind. The steroid abuse claim stemmed from the fact that he worked out at a gym, is built like an athlete… and once bought some needles for his mother's medication!

IN ITS panic over the collapse of Enron and its accountant Arthur Andersen, the government set up the Co-ordinating Group on Audit and Accounting to guard against similar accounting frauds in Britain.

One important proposal allowed the government authorities to get information on dodgy company accounts from the organisation that knows most about them, the Inland Revenue. "Data held by the Inland Revenue," it stipulated, "can be used to identify high-risk accounts and inform the FRRP work." (The FRRP, the financial reporting review panel, supervises the accounting profession).

The proposal was agreed by Patricia Hewitt, trade and industry secretary – and a former research director for Arthur Andersen's sister organisation. But it shocked big business and high finance. The very idea that the Revenue should be passing on its doubts and worries about company accounts to regulatory busybodies who might do something about it was intolerable.

They took their worries to the Large Corporates Forum of the Inland Revenue, set up by Labour to comfort big business. The Revenue bosses were happy to oblige. The minutes of the July meeting of the Forum have just been published. They report the assurance from the Revenue that companies will be informed in advance before their accounts are passed to the FRRP, and that only very few accounts, if any, will be passed on. The company representatives, especially Mike Suffrin, the man from Rolls Royce whose accounts were heavily criticised by analysts last year, were well pleased.

Street of Shame

TO FILL the vacancy left by the departure of Neil "Wolfman" Wallis, the press complaints commission (PCC) has appointed *Daily Star* editor Peter Hill to its ranks.

"I am delighted to welcome Peter Hill to the commission," said PCC chairman Sir Christopher Meyer, who praised Hill's "long and distinguished career" in journalism and predicted that he would "contribute enormously to our work".

Indeed: who better to educate lay members of the PCC on the finer points of news values? As Hill put it in an interview with the *Times* last year: "We think we know what our readers want… Readers are only really interested in people who are on television… And we like bottoms because bottoms are fun."

"THE *News of the World* was RIGHT to expose an evil plot to kidnap Victoria Beckham and her children, press chiefs have ruled," shrieked the paper on 21 September, ignoring the fact that that was *not* what the press complaints commission (PCC) had been investigating.

The fact that the rag had got off on a technicality – the payment it made to a convicted criminal was given before proceedings had begun, something which was not covered by the code as it stood at the time – was glossed over by the paper which, despite the collapse of the supposed kidnappers' trial, preferred to concentrate on the broader picture: "We were RIGHT in Posh case."

Unfortunately that does not seem to apply to the same edition's front page which reported that "the marriage of David and Victoria Beckham has hit trouble". The story was dismissed as "a load of rubbish" the next day by the *News of The World*'s own sister paper, the *Sun*.

IN A letter to the *Observer* last week, the fanciful young hack Johann Hari deplored the "series of very silly lies" about him that have appeared in the *Eye*.

"Even the slightest factual analysis of *Private Eye*'s retaliatory accusations causes them to immediately crumble into dust." Alas! By the time the letter appeared, yet another of Hari's own columnar pillars had crumbled.

On 26 March this year Hari regaled *Independent* readers with the tale of Kenneth Joseph, a young American pastor who travelled to Iraq as a human shield but was then "shocked back to reality" by the discovery that the Iraqi people all supported President Bush's war. On the strength of this recantation, Hari argued, "every single anti-war protester should… reconsider their view. This is not 'pro-war propaganda': Joseph was as anti-war as the most vehement member of the Stop the War coalition, but he was also an honest man who could not disregard the evidence of his own eyes."

Not so. Joseph's story was indeed a propaganda fabrication by right-wingers associated with the Rev Moon's Unification Church, and several readers wrote to Hari pointing out that the scam had already been exposed elsewhere. Though Hari promised to investigate, he added that he was a very busy boy. Besides, "it's cheap and dishonest to try to skip my arguments because you think, on the basis of obviously ridiculous reports [in the *Eye*], that I'm 'a fraud'."

This provoked further email bombardments from unhappy *Indie* readers. And last week, a mere six months after the initial piece, the wretched Hari added a small PS to the column on his website: "NOTE, written 25 September 2003: It transpires that Kenneth Joseph was probably a bullshitter, and that his claims were false. I should have checked his story out more rigorously before I used it…" Can this be the same Johann Hari who complains about articles that disintegrate under "the slightest factual analysis"?

OUR profile of Nick Rufford, the *Sunday Times* hack who may be criticised by the Hutton report, has elicited further proof of his addiction to bizarre cloak-and-dagger antics.

Three years ago Rufford travelled to Yorkshire in the hope of a chat with one Mustafa Bazelya, whose brother was not only a former Libyan ambassador to London (expelled after the murder of a dissident in west London) but also one of Colonel Gadaffi's most senior intelligence officers. Being Rufford, however, he decided there was no point trying the direct approach.

On arriving at Bazelya's house he introduced himself as the deputy sports editor of the *Sunday Times*, explaining that he had been despatched to write a profile of Mustafa's son Eamonn, a barman who plays Sunday League football for Scarborough's West Pier XI.

Mustafa was understandably puzzled that his son's sporting interests should be thought worthy of national newspaper coverage – and even more puzzled when, after only a couple of minutes' conversation, it became embarrassingly obvious that the "deputy sports editor" knew absolutely nothing about football.

The irony is that the deception was not only unnecessary but actually counter-productive. Bazelya might have been willing to talk about his brother, albeit guardedly, if Rufford had admitted from the outset that this was what he wanted. But, thanks to his ludicrous subterfuge, the wretched hack was sent packing.

AT THE London *Evening Standard*, where circulation has dipped below 340,000 and a different hack is axed each week, chairman Lord Rothermere is asking staff how to save the struggling title.

Step forward health correspondent Isabel Oakeshott. The bleach-blonde thruster proposes an annual bonus for staff, graded according to how many days of sick leave they take in the year – thus encouraging the galley-slaves to keep toiling even when they are ill.

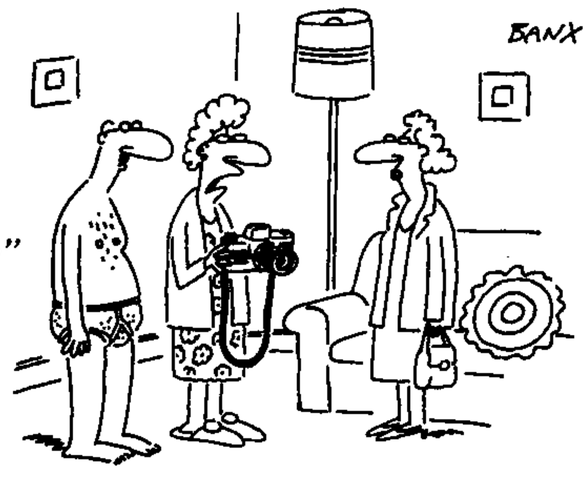
Although the idea has not gone down well with fellow hacks, who accuse her of being a Quisling, she might expect it to meet with the approval of Associated Newspapers' workaholic editor-in-chief Paul Dacre. Alas! She overlooked the fact that if the group implemented her bonus system, the biggest loser would be none other than Dacre himself – who recently returned to work after many months "on the sick", recovering from a heart condition.

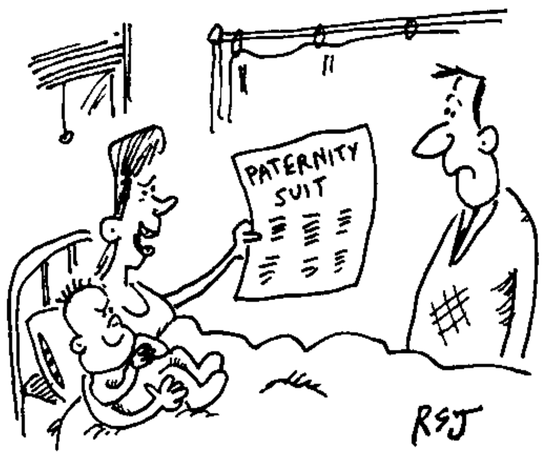
THE Londoner's Diary in the *Evening Standard* had fun last week attacking the *New Statesman* for its pious stance on nepotism ("Is it back?" asked the *Staggers*, which employs the prime minister's sister-in-law as a columnist.)

Alas, *Standard* readers will have missed a small irony. For the diary piece appeared near a pisspoor cartoon by Marf, a young woman cartoonist who has recently been appointed after Patrick Blower was unceremoniously dumped.

Why has "Marf" suddenly been given the highly coveted staff job on a newspaper? Presumably her appointment can have had nothing to do with the fact that editor Veronica Wadley, who recruited her, also happens to be her godmother.

"He's always wanted to do a calendar for charity"





"Ahh look, he's got your money"

PIERS MORON's *Daily Morgan* takes a dim view of tabloid intrusion, as its editorial on Monday made clear.

"A young man goes out for a drink with a colleague. Next day pictures of them are plastered over some newspapers. The man, of course, is David Beckham, who is rarely out of the headlines. But that doesn't make him fair game for any sleazy story. He doesn't deserve to be harassed and hounded as he starts his new job in Madrid. The shabby snatched pictures are being used as a dig at Victoria."

Even in Moron's skull, the words "Victoria" and "snatched pictures" must surely ring a bell. For who was it, in his previous job as editor of the *News of the Screws*, who incurred the PCC's fiercest-ever condemnation – plus a bollocking from the Dirty Digger – after running a story about Countess (Victoria) Spencer's treatment at a private clinic for eating disorders and alcohol addiction?

Piers may say he's a repentant sinner. Not so, however: only last year he told the high court why celebs such as Naomi Campbell deserved to be harassed and hounded. "If you are going to relentlessly use the media to promote a commercial image of yourself… you have less right to privacy than the man or woman in the street… I have a general view that celebrities who talk generally or publicly for private gain can't then turn around and bleat privacy as so many of them of the current mode seem to do. It's a ridiculous situation."

But perhaps not quite as ridiculous as the spectacle of Moron himself, in one of his periodical fits of morality, now bleating at editors who treat Posh'n'Becks as "fair game".

THE *Sun* is desperately confused about what to think about Frank Bruno. Having derided him as "bonkers" and a "nut" in its first edition last Tuesday, the paper had a sudden change of heart and decided he was to be pitied after all.

"No one loves Frank Bruno more than the *Sun*", proclaimed the paper's editorial on Wednesday, announcing the launch of a charity appeal to help people with mental health problems. "We've been by his side throughout his career, sharing his triumphs and helping shoulder his tragedies. To us he's one of the family."

Presumably, then, it was another *Sun* newspaper which gleefully reported in November 1997 that Laura Bruno, the ex-boxer's wife, had been granted a court order banning her husband from "assaulting, molesting or harassing her", (the couple were later reconciled). Otherwise it would be difficult for editor Rebekah Wade to square this with her other current campaign to name and shame the "wife beating brutes" who are "Britain's hidden shame". "Every week, two women are killed by husbands or partners," the paper's editorial cautioned on the day that Bruno was sectioned.

If Wade is having trouble deciding her editorial line, perhaps she could get some advice from her chief reporter John Kay, the man who, by chance, first reported Bruno's problems for the *Sun* in July under the sympathetic headline "Lonely Bruno Cracks Up at Clinic." No doubt he could help her with both campaigns, having himself spent time in a psychiatric hospital in the late 1970s after being convicted of killing his wife. He has remained at the *Sun* ever since.

HACKWATCH

Bruce Anderson

CONSERVATIVES gather for their annual conference in Blackpool on 6 October, with many of them wondering how on earth the party got itself into such a mess. The question will no doubt be echoed by that elder statesman of Tory punditry, political columnist Bruce "the Brute" Anderson. But there's one obvious answer which he can be expected to ignore: that they were foolish enough to heed his advice.

May 2001: A month before the general election almost everyone assumes that another Labour landslide is inevitable. But Bruce knows better. "Don't count Mr Hague out on the basis of a few polls," he tells *Independent* readers. "After the blunders and hesitancies of the opening days, Labour has lost its nerve, while the Tories have found theirs." He believes that the Tories may yet pull off a surprise victory under the "buoyant" and "wholly admirable" leadership of William Hague.

June: Whoops! After Labour's triumph, Bruce grumpily accuses Hague of a "basic strategic misjudgment" in failing to "establish his intellectual identity". Hague hands in his resignation days later – whereupon Bruce endorses the only candidate who "can reconnect the Tory party to the values and aspirations of middle Britain… Michael Portillo looks like a certain winner." One of Portillo's urgent tasks, according to Bruce, is to expose the "naïve and misleading" myths peddled by dangerous "fantasists" who still dream of "paleolithic Thatcherite purity". And who are these naïve fantasists? "Iain Duncan Smith and most of his supporters."

August: Portillo has been eliminated from the contest, but never mind: Bruce has a new hero. "Iain Duncan Smith… has strongly-held principles of an old-fashioned Tory nature, but he fully intends to re-work Tory policies for contemporary voters and new electoral challenges… Mr Duncan Smith has an incisive mind… Any Tory who wants his party to have a future has only one choice."

October: Bruce is delighted by IDS's first month in the job. "Mr Hague… may have been highly intelligent, but by temperament he was no intellectual. Iain Duncan Smith is."

December: The honeymoon is over. "On present indications, there is a possibility that within a few weeks the Labour party will have rolled up the Tory party and destroyed Iain Duncan Smith's leadership," Bruce reveals mournfully. "Those of us who supported him had to argue against his detractors, who insisted that he was simply not a big enough man to be leader. He will show you, we said. Thus far, he has not."

January 2002: The honeymoon is resumed. "When I was critical of Iain Duncan Smith late last year, his people angrily insisted that I was confusing inactivity with strategic calculation… So it has proved."

March: Spring arrives, and love is blossoming. "In the autumn, he [IDS] seemed to be making a slow start. This led some commentators, including me, to wonder whether he was up to it. He appeared far too calm; did he have any idea of the size of the task he had taken on? I am now convinced those doubts were ill-founded. The calm did not arise from incomprehension, but from confidence."

July: "A number of those who worked hardest to prevent Mr Duncan Smith from becoming leader have been pleasantly surprised by his performance," Bruce claims in the *Independent*. "This should have been expected. He was always a bigger, more complex man than some of his more simple-minded supporters realised."

November: Or was he? "It is still too early to give up on IDS's leadership," Bruce writes. "He is not a man of first-rate intellectual gifts, but neither is Tony Blair." Besides, anything is better than "the chaos of a leadership election… Mr Duncan Smith is still the obvious leader of his party". Bruce adds that "no sensible Tory is entitled to be disappointed at the way in which he is leading the party. He has done a great deal to turn negatives into positives."

January 2003: Or not, as the case may be: Bruce notes that the new leader "was elected because he was neither Michael Portillo nor Kenneth Clarke, and has not yet succeeded in turning those negatives into positives". Nevertheless, he urges Conservatives to stop grumbling about IDS. "The Tories will not recover until they deserve to recover. At present, they are getting their just desserts. It has become routine to blame all this on Mr Duncan Smith. That is not only unfair, which does not matter as politics has never been fair, but it is inaccurate."

February: Why are the Tories in a worse mess than ever? "IDS must take much of the blame for this," Bruce argues. "He failed to define himself or to establish a political identity."

May: "Last October, IDS nearly resigned," Bruce reveals dramatically on 5 May. "He then made the wrong decision, and stayed." *Wrong?* This is the same Bruce Anderson who warned a month later that another leadership election would be disastrous; but now he yearns for one. "Iain Duncan Smith has not the judgement, the personality, the intellect, the leadership skills or the self-confidence to lead his party anywhere near victory… He should go now."

June: Recent opinion polls show the Tories creeping up on Labour. Time for the Brute to change his mind again? Apparently not. "There is no longer any ground for hope," he wails. "Mr Duncan Smith's performances have been abject… If IDS went to shoot fish in a barrel, he would miss the barrel. The man is not up to it."

August: Hoorah! Bruce has a candidate to succeed IDS. "Oliver Letwin, who taught philosophy at Cambridge, has a formidable brain and impregnable self-confidence," he drools. "But there is no trace of pomposity or desiccation… As the voters find Blair's tele-evangelist insincerity increasingly grating, they could easily warm to Letwin's decency, truthfulness and generosity of spirit… Letwin has the freshness, intelligence and honesty to inspire a political renewal."

September: Bruce issues his eve-of-conference appeal to Tory MPs: sack IDS and elect the aptly-named Letwin. "He would… win over millions of voters who are now reluctant to go to the polls. Though they may seem to approach politics from behind a carapace of cynicism, many of them would be in the market for decency and honest leadership."

Decency, honesty, an incisive mind… Before accepting the compliments, Oliver Letwin ought to recall that these are precisely the words which only a couple of years ago Bruce was applying to, er, Iain Duncan Smith.

27 (across) A champion paper (8)

Crossword clue set by Rufus in the *Guardian*, 22 September. (Answer: Guardian)

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

AUSTRALIA DIARY

Wednesday 8 October, 12.30pm: Sir Nicholas Montagu, chairman of the UK Inland Revenue, delivers a lecture in Canberra sponsored by the National Institute of Economics and Business. Subject: "Tax Morality: Paying Tax as a Badge of Citizenship." (No mention to be made of Mapeley or Bermuda or the morality of selling UK government tax offices worth hundreds of millions to a company in a tax haven.)

Friday 10 October, 3pm: Start of the Rugby World Cup.

AFTER the Kelly affair, Tony Blair promised that the "culture of spin was over". But at Labour's Bournemouth conference it was business as usual.

In the week before conference party panjandrums briefed hacks that the government could expect to be defeated "three or four times"; but behind the scenes the decision had already been taken to cut the number of potentially embarrassing motions submitted by unions and local parties from last year's six to four. And as the conference opened, it became apparent that at least one of them would note in the purest *arslikhan* that "on 2 August this government would become the longest serving Labour government in history".

Attempts by rebels in Brent East to call for a leadership election were deposited in the memory hole, along with a host of demands to drop university top-up fees. Only one hostile resolution – from Unison, calling for an end to foundation hospitals – slipped through. So instead of the government losing three or four votes, as the *Eye* went to press it seemed likely it would lose only one.

If the object of the spin was to show Tony Blair and his government emerging relatively unscathed from Bournemouth, it was remarkably successful.

DELEGATES who wanted a full debate on Iraq were told there would be one – but only in a conference session entitled "Britain in the World".

What they weren't told was that there wouldn't be a vote and that the "Britain in the World" debate would encompass everything from Burma to HIV in South Africa.

Since the unions had decided to concentrate their fire on foundation hospitals, there weren't enough votes to force a debate on the many motions calling for an end to Britain's involvement in Iraq and for the United Nations to take over instead. Thus Iraq was kept off the Bournemouth agenda (despite being on the agenda everywhere else in the country).

A ROW looms for Labour in the South Wales seat of Blaenau Gwent, once represented by Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot.

Labour members, including sitting MP Llew Smith who is retiring, were furious to learn that the seat, one of the safest in the country, had been designated an "all wimmin seat", and immediately protested. More than 1,000 signatures were gathered in a matter of hours with only one person supporting the wimmin-only list.

Now popular local Welsh assembly member Peter Law is threatening to run as a "Blaenau Gwent Labour" candidate in the general election, a move that would also deprive Rhodri Morgan of his one-seat Labour majority in the assembly. Labour insiders in Wales reckon Law has every chance of winning if he decides to stand.

THE rich gulf sheikhdom of Bahrain has been graced by many famous British political visitors, but none so famous as Cherie Blair, who has recently returned from her second trip there this year. What exactly was she doing?

The Downing Street press office will only say that she was attending "legal conferences" and that they can make no comment on Mrs Blair's professional life. Among her contributions to those legal conferences was a long paper on constitutional law. The details of the paper have not been published, but they apparently did not include any reflection on the constitution in Bahrain, whose government boasts of its recent conversion to constitutional reform.

Central to those reforms are a prime minister who has been in office for 31 years, a king from the Khalifa family which includes the foreign minister, the defence minister, the Islamic affairs minister, and the minister for the interior, all of whom (and many others) are appointed by the Khalifa family and are members of that family.

Another unusual aspect of constitutional reform in Bahrain is that the elected chamber has no power over the unelected chamber, whose members are appointed by the Khalifa family and make all the important decisions. Another is that the former British army officer Ian Henderson, who was responsible for so long for "intelligence" and "security" in Bahrain, is still wanted for questioning by the Metropolitan police.

HERE'S a coincidence. In May the *Eye* ran a couple of pieces about the Learning and Skills Council (which replaced the old TECs and the further education funding council). We noted that new "flex allowances" negotiated with the union include for every worker a compulsory and inflexible £336 worth of health care provided by BUPA.

This was mandatory; and even if a worker opted out of the flex allowance scheme in general, there was no escaping the £336 from BUPA. The *Eye* revealed that this rather inflexible arrangement poured some £1.5m of taxpayers money into BUPA, whose chairman, "new" Labour favourite and former BP managing director Bryan Sanderson, is also chairman of the Learning and Skills Council.

This arrangement, the *Eye* disclosed, caused some dismay at the council, whose vice chairman, former TUC general-secretary John Monks, was "said to be not at all happy about it" (*Eye* 1080). Well, soon after that piece appeared, the council started a "re-tendering process" for the provision of health care under the scheme. Three candidates were shortlisted, including BUPA, but BUPA didn't win the contract and has now been kicked out.

The Learning and Skills Council insist this has "absolutely nothing to do" with the apparently clashing interests of Bryan Sanderson.

LONG and loud was the "new" Labour wailing when the government's flagship scheme for extending education among the masses collapsed two years ago in a flurry of fraud and incompetence.

In May 2002 the House of Commons education select committee slammed the government's individual learning accounts (ILA) scheme and Capita, the private firm hired with taxpayers' money to carry it out.

Paddy Doyle, Crapita's £330,000-a-year operations director, got a terrible grilling from MPs. He was asked if Crapita had considered the likelihood of a massive fraud by shysters exploiting the scheme. He replied: "I do not believe it crossed our minds" (*Eye* 1054). The fraud went ahead at full pelt, however, and a year later Crapita was attacked again by the Commons public accounts committee (*Eye* 1078).

The scheme, it was agreed, had lost some £100m in taxpayers' money. Naturally, improvements were in order, and the department for education and skills applied its mind to a new scheme that is to be "rolled out" next September.

The contract for running the new scheme has just been awarded. It will cost taxpayers £48.4m over five years. The winning contractor? Crapita.

IRAQ: BLAIR SPEAKS

LATEST APPOINTMENTS

LABOUR can't get enough of the Powell brothers, it seems.

Jonathan Powell is Tony Blair's chief of staff and, judging by the Hutton evidence, chief salesman for the "Saddam has WMD" story.

Meanwhile his brother **Chris Powell**, chairman of advertising agency BMP DDB, sells things like Orange Chocolate Balls and "new" Labour (he's the party's advertising adviser). Culture secretary Tessa Jowell has found another £23,850-a-year job for him as chair of Nesta, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

Nesta doles out £250m of lottery money in grants to the "innovative" and "creative". Jowell was "delighted" to give Chris the job: his skills advertising Marmite on TV show he has "the vision and leadership necessary to drive forward these important agendas".

Chris Powell also sits on the board of United Business Media, publisher of *Exchange & Mart*, alongside another Labour favourite, **Adair Turner**. Turner is a banker (vice-chair of Merrill Lynch) and, thanks to Lord Sainsbury, he is now in charge of university social research too. Sainsbury gave him a seat on the Economic and Social Research Council, which gives £94m in research grants to higher education.

Lord Sainsbury also appointed **Dr Peter Fellner** to the board of the Medical Research Council, responsible for £410m of public medical research every year. Fellner chairs two biotech firms which hope to make money from new drugs: Celltech (which paid him £860,400 last year) and British Biotech. He was formerly chief executive of drug maker Roche UK.

100 YEARS AGO

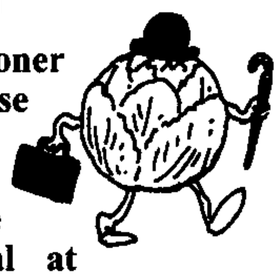
THE late Sir Keith Joseph saw his dreams of one day leading the Conservative party evaporate after making a wildly intemperate and misjudged speech in which he claimed that the "working classes were breeding too much".

So who was the mysterious speech writer? Step forward Jonathan Sumption QC, the £2m-a-year barrister currently acting for the government in the Hutton inquiry.

Variously described as "dry as dust" and "damned arrogant", Sumption has also acted for Mohamed Fayed and more recently for Jack Straw as the latter vainly sought to put ex-Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet on trial. As for his youthful role as a speechwriter for Sir Keith, Sumption is strangely reticent.

'Backbiter'

THE SPROUT



EUROPEAN commissioner Neil Kinnock, one of whose jobs is to stamp out corruption in Brussels, is on the spot himself in the furore over the financial scandal at Eurostat, the statistics office.

Kinnock has been accused of lying to MEPs; and for once his accusers aren't from the UK's rabble of 36 Tories who call for his resignation on a monthly basis, but from other EU nations.

The latest slur comes from Danish MEP Mogens Camre, who has demanded to know when Kinnock first heard about the Eurostat affair – and in particular about the audit inquiry of its dealings with Eurogramme, one of four companies apparently set up as a slush fund. Kinnock's reply was curt: he knew nothing about it until the newspapers broke the story in May this year.

A letter sent to Kinnock from Dorte Schmidt-Brown, who blew the whistle on the Eurostat fraud back in 2001, suggests a rather different timing.

Allegations that Kinnock lied were first published in the German magazine *Der Stern*, and followed up in an email from the European parliament's committee chairman Diemut Theato, a German, who demanded that Kinnock explain himself. In an aggressive apology written to Theato, Kinnock took issue with the way his words were portrayed in the German weekly.

According to the confidential letter – obtained by *The Sprout* – he "firmly rejects allegations" that he deliberately misled the committee. When he suggested that "he wasn't aware that there had been an internal auditor's report into Eurogramme" (16 July), what he claims to have meant was: "I have always made it clear that I did know of the existence of an audit report [sic] as a result of correspondence" (4 September, letter to Theato). He explains feebly: "I did inadvertently use an inaccurate phrase."

In the letter Kinnock claims that if he had been aware that he had said what he said, he wouldn't have said it; or if somebody had told him that he had said it, then he would have withdrawn it. Or something like that. Sadly, nobody in the committee had access to the evidence until it was published in the German magazine.

His final claim that his "words did not have the intention – or the effect – of misleading the committee" is laughable, says the Danish MEP Camre, who is incredulous. "Kinnock lied and tried to sweep it under the carpet," he told *The Sprout*. "It is simply a set up and it can be proved that he was trying to fool the committee."

The above article was compiled by *The Sprout* magazine, available in the UK by calling 0870 241 8832 or through www.thesprout.net

JACK AND THE BEANS TALK

Sixing it up – those top Hutton lies

AS Lord Hutton wades through 23 days worth of transcripts and 9,000 pieces of published evidence in order to write his report on the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr David Kelly, the *Eye* offers readers a bite-sized reminder of the biggest lies that have been exposed by the inquiry over the last two months.

1 "The allegation that the 45-minute claim provoked disquiet among the intelligence community, which disagreed with its inclusion in the dossier… is also completely and totally untrue." — Tony Blair, House of Commons, 4 June.

On 19 September 2002 (just one day before the finalisation of the dossier's contents), the branch head of the science and technological directorate at the Defence Intelligence Staff, wrote to the deputy chief director detailing "reservations on several aspects of the dossier", on the part of his colleagues including "a number of questions in our minds relating to the intelligence on the military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, particularly about the times mentioned and the failure to differentiate between the two types of weapons."

In another memo the following day, another member of the DIS advised: "It is not clear what is meant by 'weapons are deployable within 45 minutes'. The judgement is too strong considering the intelligence on which it is based."

2 "There was no attempt, at any time, by any official, or Minister, or member of the No 10 Downing Street staff, to override the intelligence judgements of the Joint Intelligence Committee." — Tony Blair, House of Commons, 4 June.

In an email dated 19 September 2002, after the deadline that had been given to JIC members to submit changes to the dossier, No 10 chief of staff Jonathan Powell sent the following email to John Scarlett: "I think the statement on page 19 that 'Saddam is able to use chemical and biological weapons if he believes his regime is under threat' is a bit of a problem. It backs up the… argument that there is no CBW threat and we will only create one if we attack him. I think you should redraft the para."

Although the sentence had already been passed by JIC members in three separate drafts with no objections, Scarlett told Hutton that as a result of Powell's email he "looked at it again" and "we concluded that that was not right, the way this was phrased, and therefore we took that out."

3 "I did not authorise the leaking of the name of David Kelly. Emphatically not. That is completely untrue." — Tony Blair, press conference, 22 July.

Questioned by Lord Hutton on 28 August about the decision to confirm David Kelly's name to any journalists who guessed it, Blair admitted that "responsibility is mine in the end. I take the decisions." He also said that at the meetings where the decision was taken, "there was some surprise we expressed to each other… that it had not already leaked, and I think there was no doubt in anyone's mind that if on reinterview it was clear that he was in all probability the source then we were going to have to disclose that."

4 "The matter was handled in accordance with MoD procedures and had been overseen by those at the top of the MoD in view of the fact that it had been the lead department." — Briefing by prime minister's official spokesman, 22 July.

Questioned by Hutton, Blair admitted that no one from the MoD was present at the meeting where the decision was made to confirm Dr Kelly's name. He also confirmed that, as the MoD's director of personnel had said on the first day of the inquiry, no relevant MoD procedures existed. The prime minister did however continue to maintain he had "played it by the book".

5 "We made great efforts to ensure Dr Kelly's anonymity." — Geoff Hoon, BBC interview, 19 July.

Questioned by Hutton, the defence secretary admitted that on 8 July, just two days after he had learned of Dr Kelly's identity, he had officially approved the following course of action: "If a journalist approached the press office with the right name, then that name would be confirmed by press officers." He also said that Sir Kevin Tebbit checked the plan with him twice during the following day, and he confirmed his approval.

6 "I do believe that anyone with an interest in good, decent journalism… should understand that when allegations are made, when lies are broadcast, when there is not a shred of evidence to substantiate the allegation they should apologise and then we can move on." — Alastair Campbell, *Channel 4 News*, 27 June.

Asked why he did not complain about a front page story in the *Sunday Times* on 1 June which specifically accused him of making "our intelligence services become the puppets of a lying government", Campbell replied: "It happens to be untrue but there is not much I can do about that."

When Geoff Hoon was asked why his department had not corrected the many newspapers which had interpreted the "45-minute" claim in the dossier to refer to anything other than battlefield munitions, Geoff Hoon told the inquiry: "I have spent many years trying to persuade newspapers and journalists to correct their stories. It is an extraordinarily time consuming and generally frustrating process."

WOMAN OF ACHIEVEMENT

ANGELA MORTIMER plc, the self-proclaimed "leading quality secretarial recruitment consultancy", says it champions the cause of women at work.

"As a company, we are women working with women for women," boasted company chair Angela when she won the 2003 European Union Woman of Achievement award.

But has anyone told her husband John, the firm's chief executive officer? He has just been found guilty of discriminating against a pregnant employee and unfairly dismissing her.

Contracts manager Deborah Harding won £15,000 damages for injury, which *Recruiter Magazine* says is around three time the figure usually awarded in such cases. Damages for discrimination and unfair dismissal are expected to be assessed in the region of £70,000.

Angela Mortimer plc would not comment on its own treatment of women, saying it was considering an appeal.

FURTHER EDUCASHUN

OPEN a stationery cupboard at St Andrew's University this term and you're quite likely to find a first-year student sleeping in it.

A serious accommodation crisis at the Scottish university has left new students sleeping in basements, former admin offices and crowded three to a common room. Other first years have been sharing small student bedrooms with just ten inches between their beds.

Until this year first years had been guaranteed a place in halls; but the refurbishment of student blocks has resulted in a loss of around 200 rooms for the 2,700 intake.

The problem is partly down to the huge influx of students due to the "Wills effect" on applications.

Student representatives claim the university's admissions and residential services departments seemed barely aware of the impending problem until the students arrived and are doing little to rectify the problem.

ITV

Killers On Camera (ITV1)
Conversations With Rowan Williams (Channel 4)

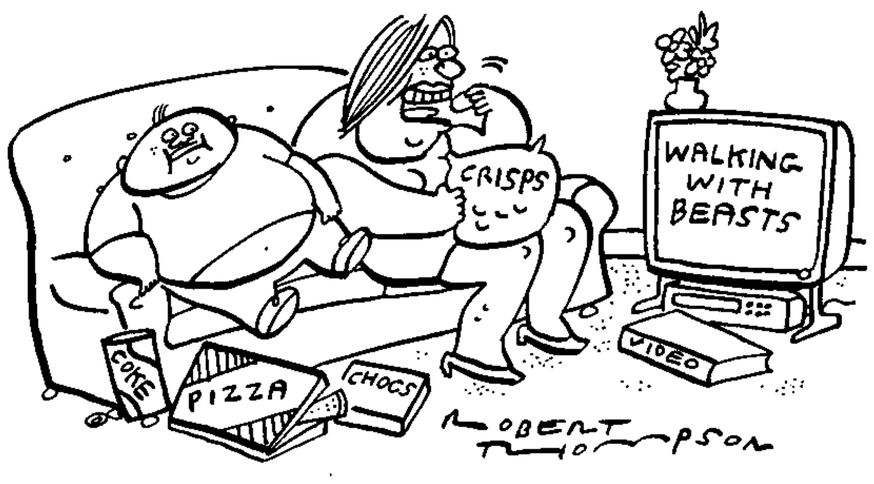
VIEWERS and critics often talk about "television" as if the medium were a single thing which is either entirely in a strong state or a weak one. But in a single week's schedules there can be extraordinary differences. Take the two main commercial channels this week: while the third terrestrial network seems to be aiming as low as it can possibly go, the fourth seems to be reaching as high as it reasonably could.

The gutter-grubber is **Killers On Camera**. Twenty years ago, you always knew that, however bad a programme was, the people making the programme had at least shot the pictures themselves. Since the growth of home video and CCTV footage, there's a whole area of cheapo-programming in which pictures which were never intended to be shown on television provide the material for entire series.

Killers On Camera, for example, exists only because the police and criminal evidence act requires detectives to record interviews with suspects. ITV has now bought a job-lot of videos the cops and courts are finished with and tried to pretend that they provide a vital insight into the criminal mind.

For viewers impatient for the next Rendell or Rankin, there possibly is a certain interest in seeing how nonchalant and convincing a killer can be under interrogation. A youth accused of killing a vicar in Sussex first calmly lies blind about the possible reasons for blood-stains in the cleric's car and then, implicated by a friend's evidence, spins a fantastic yarn about his involvement in an undercover crime-fighting gang.

The drawback is that the viewer feels uncomfortably voyeuristic: knowing that only jurors and police officers have any real reason to see these tapes. And, even for those who feel no moral qualms, there's a practical barrier to viewing. Hastings police station shoots its interviews with a single angle from a camera mounted high on the wall. This means that the viewer mainly sees the top of the suspect's head and a



"Mum, what's walking?"

miniature image of the detectives reflected in a mirror behind his shoulder. In some cases, the sound is so ropey the replies have to be sub-titled.

In both technique and content, *Killers On Camera* is astonishingly shoddy. A series showing that criminals can't get away with murder gives the strong impression that ITV executives think they can.

After that gutter-grubber, it's a pleasure to find Channel 4 stretching for heaven in **Conversations With Rowan Williams**. The new Archbishop of Canterbury isn't the first Anglican cleric to attempt television – bishops James Jones and Richard Holloway have both had series – but he's certainly the one who has done it in the oddest format.

The idea is that the hairy primate interviews people who shed light on theological dilemmas. In week one, he explores the issue of genetic engineering with Nobel-winning DNA whizz Sir John Sulston and a mother who is having a genetically-screened baby which will provide tissue for the sick child she already has.

But, rather than simply asking these people questions, the archbishop for some reason occupies the role known in American chat-shows as "second banana". He is first introduced by a main host: journo Ian Hargreaves, whose presence underlines the connections between this format and Radio 4's *The Moral Maze*.

Sitting in front of some arty sculptures in a room at Lambeth Palace, Hargreaves asks questions of the archbishop and then invites him to put the same queries to those who are always described as the "guests" of the priest rather than the presenter. Dr Williams does this in a curious corkscrewed position which presumably is supposed to illustrate how twisty these dilemmas are. There is some illuminating debate but the strange relay format distracts you from it.

Though very different, the series do have something in common. From the cop programme's screening of pictures intended only for use within the legal system to the religious series' use of clunky camera moves and set-ups which were last seen on the Open University circa 1972, neither programme seems to have clocked or bothered that television is supposed to be a visual medium.

Taken together, they offer evidence for the fear that – as the medium becomes ever more technologically complex – the actual pictures are becoming cheaper. It's a bizarre contrast: ITV1 screening the kind of thing which could really only have a 2003 copyright line, while Channel 4 presents as new the kind of show it was doing back in the 80s.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

Judgemental, BBC1

Nick Knowles: Which disease killed thousands of British trees in the 1970s and 1980s?

Contestant: Myxomatosis.

Knowles: What was the name of Bill and Hillary Clinton's cat?

Contestant: Monica?

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Who painted The Laughing Cavalier? Franz...?

Contestant: Liszt.

Robinson: In the City of London, the Monument commemorates which 17th-century event?

Contestant: Er... the First World War?

I-SKY

"Gilligan… is a disgrace to his profession… I can't help ruminating on what the press would have said if Gilligan was at Sky News. The kid gloves approach would have given way to the ravages of wolves… Sky News has been exemplary, award winning and my favourite channel."

— Michael Winner, *News of the World*, 7 September.

"Eat your heart out Roman Abramovich. I took control of a group of players in Wednesday night's Champion's League worth £1 BILLION… Getting through each stage of Europe's elite club competition has never been easier. You just need to know which buttons to press – thanks to Sky Sport's cracking new Champions League coverage… — The *Sun*, 19 September.

"FERGIE has bought daughter Princess Beatrice a Sky TV dish for her school boarding house.

Bea, 15, is desperate to watch next month's Rugby World Cup as she has a crush on England skipper Jonny Wilkinson. She and her chums at £12,000-a-year St George's School, Ascot, Berks, can also watch their favourite films thanks to Fergie, 43."

— The *Sun*, 23 September (ignoring the fact that the Rugby World Cup will be on ITV).

GOING LIVE

THE BBC Ten O'Clock News went live to Caroline Fawley in Baghdad on 25 September to get the latest Iraqi reaction to diplomatic initiatives taking place in New York.

Alas, it was fifteen minutes past midnight local time and most Iraqis are tucked up for the night.

AD NAUSEAM

A LETTER arrives from Geoffrey Russell at the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) in response to last issue's piece on food advertising to children.

Russell, we reported, had sent a memo to all IPA members warning them of impending media pressure to ban food advertising and encouraging them to deflect critics with the argument that "it's not adverts that make you fat."

His cheery reply to our piece again trotted out adland's favourite evasion – "It's not that children are p-p-picking up too many Penguins," he said, "but rather the little dears are being ferried to and from school, sitting playing computer games etc etc… But of course it's easier to blame the ads than take some exercise."

Unfortunately for Mr Russell, a Food Standards Agency report published just days after he wrote his letter suggests he is plain wrong. "Adverts blamed for poor diet of children," was a typical summation in the papers, saying the report established a "clear link between television viewing and diet, obesity and cholesterol levels" in children.

Now that this has been proven, we await Mr Russell's next memo to his members, encouraging them to examine the new evidence.

STAYING with childhood obesity, BBC Worldwide might also want to have a look at the FSA report.

The Food Commission has already made a formal complaint about the use of the BBC logo and the Tweenies cartoon characters on fatty and sugary foods being peddled to kids. BBC Worldwide's response? "We exist to maximise the value of the BBC's assets."

That much is obvious, especially if your child has a penchant for a McDonald's Tweenies Happy Meal, an M&S Tweenies children's meal, Heinz Tweenies pasta shapes, M&S Tweenies yogurt, McDougalls Tweenies star banan-roony mini-muffin mix or any of the rest of the extensive range of tie-in kiddie "snacks". According to the Food Commission, all of the above contain high levels of either sugar, fat, saturated fat or salt.

AT THE beginning of the year *Eye* 1071 warned that an EU directive banning the use of terms like "light" and "mild" to describe low-tar cigarettes would play into the hands of the marketing men.

"Most brands have decided to use colours as an alternative, so that Silk Cut Ultra will now be Silk Cut Silver." The piece said that the EU directive would undermine February's tobacco advertising ban, "as whether an instance of a colour can be constituted an advert is open to question. Yet that is precisely the technique of association pioneered by CDP's famous B&H Gold work 20 years ago."

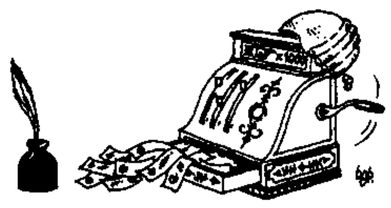
Lo and behold, on cue, Cancer Research UK in conjunction with the department of health has launched an anti-smoking campaign called "death repackaged". It features dangerous creatures given cutesy names and reminds punters that "a nice name doesn't make something less deadly". The DoH has contributed £2.5m to the push.

LIBRARY NEWS

IT SOUNDS like an e-Utopia. Every public library in the country – from large city libraries to tiny one-room rural branches – providing a free e-Government presence and resources for "digital citizenship".

This is the three-year action plan prepared by Re:Source, the national council for museums, archives and libraries. And the department of culture, media and sport is throwing its full weight behind the idea with, er, a £3m investment. Share that money out between the UK's 4,300 public libraries and that's an unspectacular £698 each over three years. Barely enough to cover the cost of software licensing, let alone to buy equipment, pay the broadband bills or train any staff.

IN THE COURTS



THE Royal Brompton Hospital in fashionable Chelsea, which only opened in 1990, is now scheduled to close and move to Paddington, along with its seven-floor heart and lung section known as The Sydney.

The closure will be mourned by many – not least the armies of lawyers who have made so much money from the prolonged disputes connected with The Sydney. The contract to build it was let in 1987 to Taylor Woodrow. The price was just under £20m and building was due to be finished in July 1989. It was finished 43 weeks late in 1990, and Taylor Woodrow was paid another £5.2m.

The case then went to arbitration and was eventually settled in December 1995. Taylor Woodrow got another £6.2m, including its legal costs, then reckoned at £2m. The hospital had to shoulder its own legal costs, also estimated at £2m. So, after years of delay, the NHS had shelled out more than half again of the cost it had originally contracted.

The hospital promptly started legal claims against 19 professional bodies, including the architects (WGI) the project managers (PMI) and the mechanical and electrical engineers (AA) for much of the extra money it had paid to Taylor Woodrow. All these defendants were represented by barristers (sometimes two at a time) and solicitors. The statement of claim was served on 5 August 1997, and was only finally settled in October 2002, more than ten years after the hospital opened.

Unravelling the mass of documentation in these actions, said Judge Lloyd, "was a daunting task (at times disheartening and reminiscent of the second Labour of Hercules [killing the many-headed hydra])." Judge Lloyd's judgment took up 147 pages. He found that most of the professional bodies were responsible for some, but not all of the extra money paid by the NHS to Taylor Woodrow.

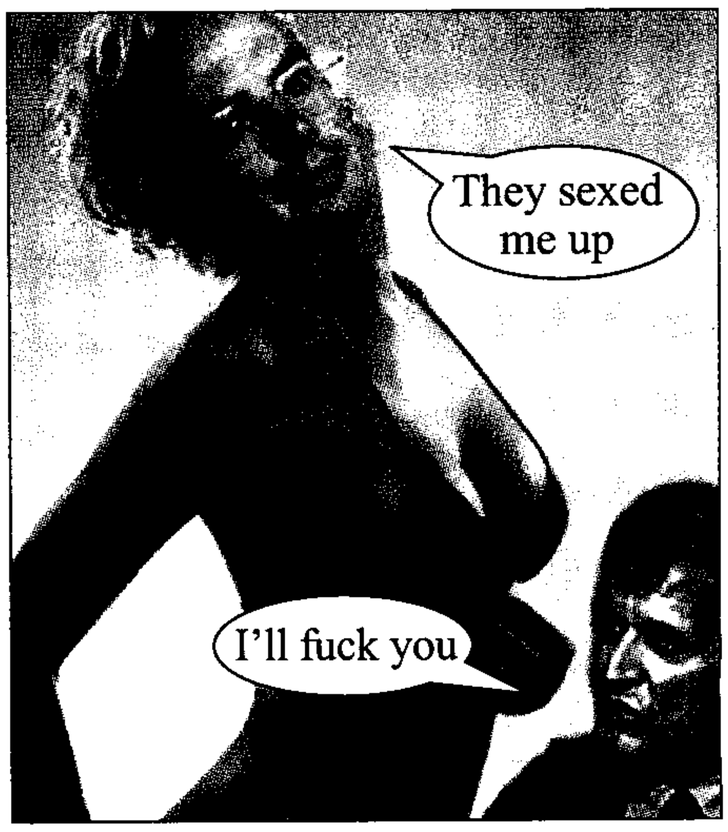
Is that the end of the matter? Not at all. On 24 September a familiar band of lawyers was in court again, this time to argue about the extent of the damages payable to the hospital. A QC plus junior on either side, and at least four solicitors each, including one who tried to clear the *Eye*'s representative out of the court in the absurd and wholly outdated belief that he had no right to be there. No one has calculated (or could calculate) the fantastic sums paid out to lawyers during these 12 years of almost continual litigation – or the total cost to the NHS. But at any rate all this is irrelevant now, a complete waste of mainly public money, since the hospital is to be moved and the valuable land it occupies devoted to more useful purposes such as luxury flats.

JUST FANCY THAT!

SPEAKING to Oneword Radio on 23 September, Labour's David Miliband claimed that "Shakespeare is our greatest living writer".

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Nell McAndrew Gilligan

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Sven and I are the new John and Yoko of peace." — Nancy Dell'Olio, *Sunday Times*.

"Boots are the new shoes." — *Sunday Times* Style section.

"Feminism is the new natalism." — David Willetts MP, on the need to increase the birth rate.

"Deserts are the new beaches." — *Doncaster Free Press*.

"3.15 is the new 4.15." — Richard Whiteley, *Countdown*.

"Loud is the new quiet." — Kitty Empire, *Observer*.

"Stress is the new back pain." — Ruth Lea, *Daily Mail*.

"Tourism bosses urged people to… make the most of what East Anglia had to offer — especially Norfolk, which they described as 'the new Cornwall'." — *Eastern Daily Press*.

"Perhaps south-east England is the new Tuscany." — Rose Shepherd, *The Times*.

"Never be scared to look stupid — stupid is the new clever." — William Knight, *Computing*.

"Is thinking the new sex?" — Danny Kelly, *Radio Times*.

"At the risk of going into *Private Eye*, I think white pepper is the new black pepper." — Stephen Fry, *Sainsbury's* magazine.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

DOING THE ROUNDS

Going Private

SO, £2bn-worth of NHS work is to be handed to seven private companies (five of them South African or North American), according to health secretary John "Oh fuck, not health" Reid.

The biggest of these Independent Sector Treatment Centre (ISTC) contracts has gone to Mercury Health, whose MD Mark Smith knows a lot about the NHS. He was chief executive of Portsmouth hospitals NHS trust from January 2001 to February 2002, but left when it got a zero star rating and its management went out to franchise.

This does not bode well for ISTCs, but Reid is confident they can knock off 250,000 routine operations a lot quicker than NHS hospitals, and at a price somewhere in between the NHS and UK private hospitals, none of which won significant contracts in the new scheme. Reid claims consultants are against it as it would reduce their private practice; but the vast majority of consultants don't do private practice. Their main objections are the effect it will have on NHS hospitals.

Initially the government promised that overseas companies would bring their own staff. Now it concedes that up to 70 percent of staff will be from the NHS, not "poached" but on secondment with the "agreement" of understaffed local trusts. In fact trainee surgeons will have to work in the new centres to get experience of routine operations, and other staff may well go willingly for higher pay and better working conditions. This will leave NHS hospitals as a sink for emergencies, the chronically sick and complex cases too ill to be seen in private hospitals.

Reid justifies paying ISTC staff substantially more than NHS staff because "they will work harder". This is nonsense, as outlined by one NHS surgeon. "The stuff they would do in ISTCs is, quite frankly, easy. It only takes 20 minutes or so to see someone with a hernia in clinic, make the diagnosis and discuss the operation. It takes 20 minutes to do the operation and the patient is out of hospital in under four hours. I regard a list of hernia repairs almost as relaxation.

"In contrast, NHS emergencies are frequently extremely ill and require complex investigation, resuscitation and multiple reviews over hours before they are fit enough for surgery, which may also be complex. They are often critically ill afterwards and need intensive input from clinicians. There may be difficult discussions with family about 'withdrawing support' and this may take place more than once. ISTC doctors may do more operations but they will be much simpler. And when things go wrong, the patients will come back to us as emergencies."

ISTCs may well reduce waiting lists for routine operations and make good political headlines, but in a system short on manpower, there will inevitably be consequences for those left behind in an NHS with fewer staff and much less money. What's needed is for the "independent" Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection (CHAI) to get its finger out and examine whether the ISTCs will offer good value and safe care without destabilising the NHS.

Reid has already been caught out suggesting that 250,000 extra patients will be treated, when in fact 115,000 will be transferred directly from the NHS. Would the money be better spent allowing the NHS to treat them?

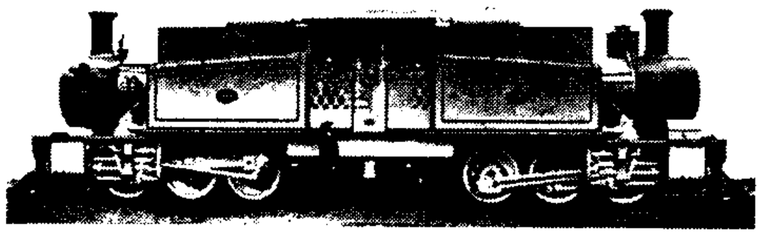
As with PFI contracts, the government and ISTC operators are playing the secretive "commercial interest" card and it is impossible to judge if our money is well spent. However, it seems likely that patients will lose the choice of whether to go to their preferred doctor at an NHS hospital, since primary care trusts will be forced to contract with the ISTCs. In one PCT, more patients have been contracted to the ISTC than actually exist in the area, raising concerns about phantom payments. CHAI was set up to ensure the NHS reforms don't just offer quick political fixes of dubious worth. It should investigate ISTC contracts as a matter of urgency.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

THESE WILL HELP. TAKE TWO DAILY - SHOULD STAVE OFF THE DIZZINESS
THANKS. ANY SIDE-EFFECTS I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ?
ONLY ONE...
YOU'LL WRITE TO YOUR MP WHEN YOU DISCOVER THERE'S A MORE EXPENSIVE DRUG THAT WOULD CLEAR UP YOUR SYMPTOMS COMPLETELY



SIGNAL FAILURES

Fool's gold

HAVING provided the alchemists at the "strategic" rail authority (SRA) with plenty of base material, the government is frustrated that the gold of good news has yet to emerge.

The base material consists of billions of pounds of public money and a fragmented, profit-driven, bickering rail industry. Any fool can see it won't produce gold: even Tony Blair's official Chunnel rail link opening last month was eclipsed by a derailed train at King's Cross, courtesy of Jarvis. Yet the government still hopes the shambles left by the Tories will somehow deliver a decent public service, and transport secretary Alistair Darling has ordered good news from the SRA in time for the Labour party conference.

In answer the SRA last week produced the glossy brochure *Everyone's Railway* filled with quotes like that from Lydia, a student, talking about how she uses the Esk Valley rail line to get to school. "It's full of pupils and students whose journey is much easier by train," she comments. Too full in fact, since this month North Yorkshire council has withdrawn 60 children's rail passes for the Arriva service due to overcrowding. Now they must travel by bus.

Other SRA ideas have included issuing a press release last month to discredit a report in *Which?* magazine that concluded: "Current proposals are unlikely to solve passengers' problems." *Which?* surveyed passengers five years ago; but when it repeated the exercise this year it found they were even less satisfied. The SRA said the report gave an "inaccurate" picture: "Since Hatfield (October 2000), the underlying trend in performance has been gradually upwards. We want to quicken that pace of change."

But *Which?* didn't question what the SRA wants. Its claim that "trains are now less likely to be on time than before the SRA was set up" is untrue if the months immediately before the SRA's launch in February 2001 are the benchmark, because that was the chaotic aftermath of the Hatfield accident. But the benchmark for the *Which?* survey was 1998, when trains were more punctual than now (and the figures then were officially "very unsatisfactory").

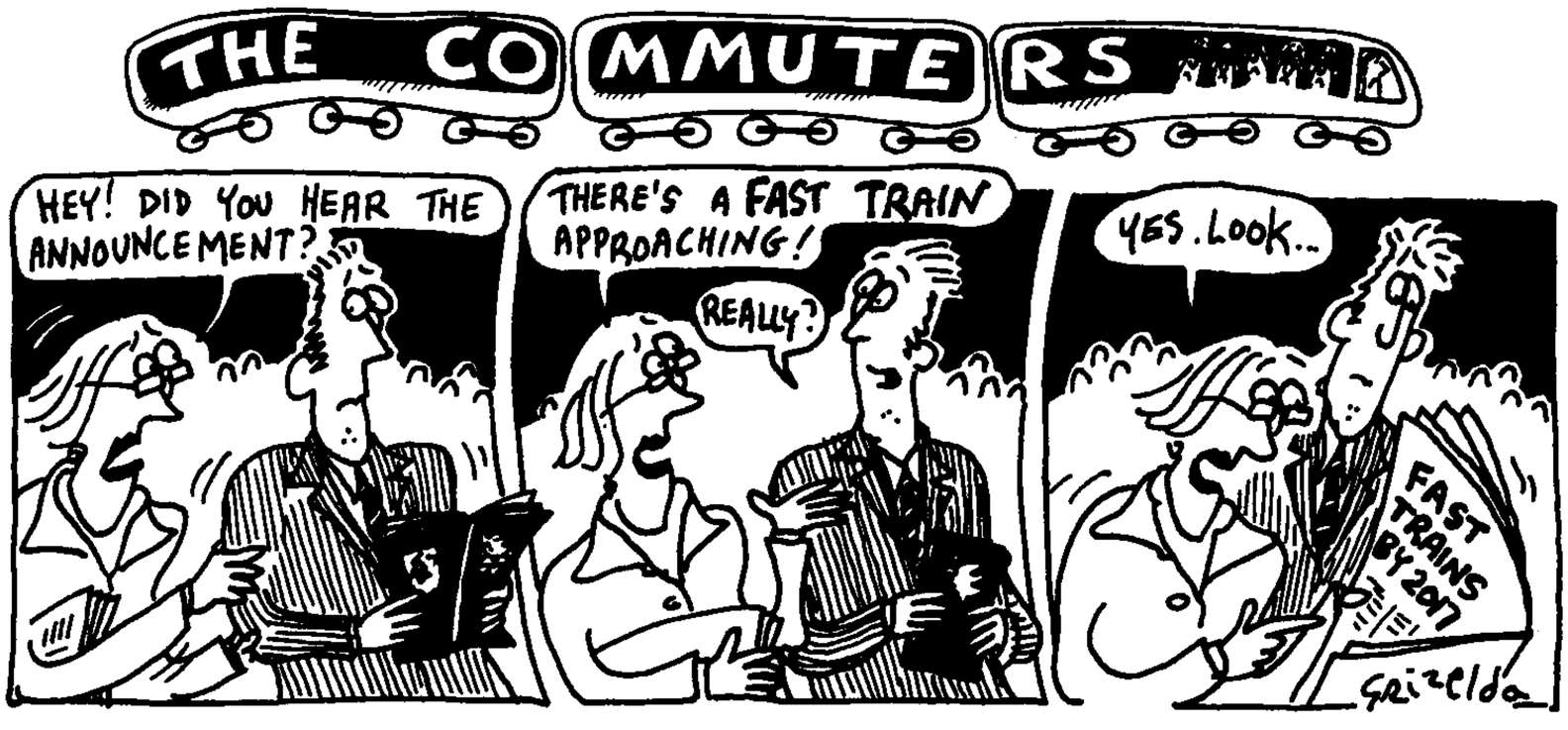
The SRA also disputed that its service cuts were to improve punctuality, saying they are "about boosting performance, not about random service cuts" – another way of saying what *Which?* had said. *Which?* also warned of fares rising to discourage travel at peak times. The SRA took offence, but its own document, *Fares Review Conclusions 2003,* argues that prices below their "economically efficient level" result in "overcrowding".

Finally, SRA boss Richard Bowker stated: "To say as *Which?* does that the travelling public seems to have been 'all but forgotten in the future of the railways' is simply wrong. Everything the rail industry is doing is focused on improving rail performance..."

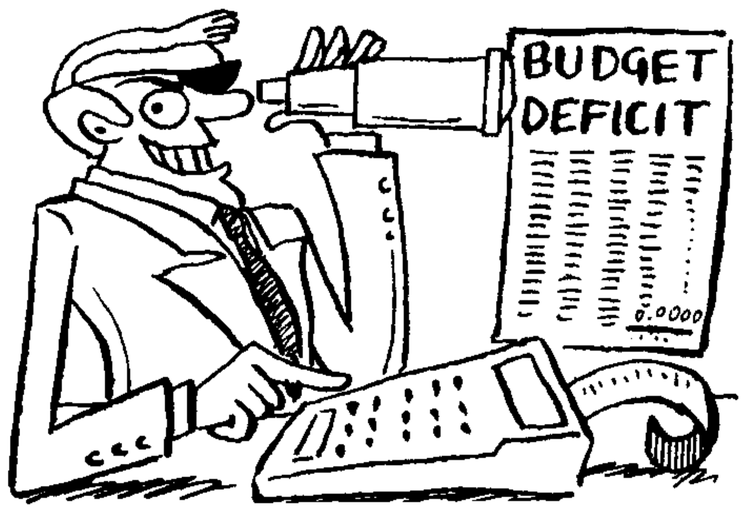
Bowker was simply wrong in his quote (in an official SRA document, not a radio interview). The press release for the *Which?* report said the public "seem to have been all but forgotten in the discussions about the future of the railways". There *is* evidence those discussions exclude passengers' representatives: the SRA ordered cuts to Virgin services this year without consulting the official watchdogs. And when the southern England watchdog asked the SRA to justify ditching electrification plans, the SRA said that would serve no useful purpose (and the watchdog's chairman was soon replaced – *Eye* 1081).

As for the rail industry being entirely "focused on improving rail performance", one only has to compare buoyant profits with dismal punctuality to see where the focus really lies.

'Dr B. Ching'



ROTTEN BOROUGHS



BATH SPARRING

BATH'S way over-budget and long delayed Spa project has now ended up in the high court. The latest hold up, causing it to miss its *ninth* opening date, is the slight problem that the paint on the walls of the four as yet unused pools is already blistered and peeling (*see Eye* 1088).

Architect Nicholas Grimshaw and Bath and North-east Somerset council (Banes) are blaming the contractor, Mowlem plc. There were extraordinary scenes last week when Banes tried to get new contractors on to the site to put things right after Mowlem refused to accept responsibility. Mowlem refused to let them in.

On Thursday 2 October Banes is seeking an injunction at the high court to have Mowlem removed. Mowlem has promised to "strenuously resist" the application and insists that, as it did not choose the paint in question, the cock-up is not its fault.

The legal fight is being headed by Banes's external legal adviser, Simon Baker of Veale Wasbrough – the man who was forced to make a grovelling apology to the council and officers after cocking-up part of the tendering process for the council's private partner in the Spa project. He denied making a mistake but admitted a "legal oversight" which cost at least £20,000.

Still, with the cost of the Spa rapidly heading for the £30m mark and local council taxpayers up for at least £15m of that, what's a few extra grand in the pockets of m'learned friends?

DOYLE'S WELL

FANS of Barnsley football club last month bade a not-so-fond farewell to the struggling club's short-lived proprietor, Peter Doyle.

Doyle, a local businessman who also happened to be a Labour councillor, a member of the planning committee and mayor of Barnsley, bought the struggling Second Division club for £2.8m on 3 December last year. He made his money out of scrap and is known locally as a bit of a character (*see Eye* 1072). His brother, Sean, runs a "security" business that has a colourful track record and enjoys the patronage of the council. Doyle talked of the club having "a bright new future" in which it would be "run for the people". The fact that the club's assets included 30 acres of town centre land valued at £20m may well have contributed to the new boss's enthusiasm.

In January this year Doyle was talking about "sweating" the club's assets, "not selling them off". But a series of attempts to bring in more capital fell through, and Doyle came under increasing flak from the fans. He complained bitterly to the local press that it was costing him £400,000 a month to keep the club going. Creditors weren't paid, and nor, for weeks at a time, were the players. He informed disgruntled fans: "There have been threats of violence. I wish these people would come down and see me. We have a big car park and I will meet them [there]."

In April it emerged that the increasingly embattled Doyle had been seen in the company of discredited ex-Leeds United chairman Peter Ridsdale. Shortly afterwards it was confirmed that Ridsdale was in take-over talks. By June these discussions had broken down, largely over Doyle's determination to hang on to land housing the club's Youth Academy, which he intended to bulldoze and replace with a cinema and shopping complex. After negotiations with an American businessman fell through, the Ridsdale deal was back on. On 4 September, Doyle finally divested himself of the club. Ridsdale was to run the football club and Barnsley council, in partnership with another local businessman, Patrick Cryne, would own the land. The council paid £2m and loaned an extra £1m to the club as part of a £6m package.

So now Barnsley council finds itself in partnership with the man whose determination to "dream the dream" at Leeds United left that football club in meltdown with debts of £90m. Cllr Doyle, meanwhile, is believed to have walked away with £1m profit. Nice work.

TOWER HAM£ETS

AS Inspector Knacker continues investigating an alleged multi-million pound fraud in Tower Hamlets, Britain's poorest borough, which has so far led to the suspension of two Labour councillors from holding party office, the relationship between the council and its many very-well-paid consultants is itself becoming a cause for concern (*Eyes passim*).

In particular the spotlight is falling on those who are either former council employees or who have been employed through companies set up by former well-connected Tower Hamlets staff.

The council's highest paid consultant, £130,000-a-year Lorraine Langham, is employed via consultancy firm Renaissance – in which she is a partner. Renaissance was founded in 1997 by Tony O'Regan shortly after he stepped down as head of the PR department in, er, Tower Hamlets. Meanwhile Gill "how to answer the telephone" Coney, whose services since June have cost the council £900 a day, was recruited via Veredus – the executive recruitment arm of our old friends Crapita. Until 1996 Coney worked for Tower Hamlets as area housing manager for the Isle of Dogs – a world removed from her shiny new consultancy role.

RIGHT ON, ALEX

NEARLY two years after Alex Owolade was sacked by Lambeth council on trumped-up disciplinary charges (*Eyes passim*), an employment tribunal has found in favour of the former Unison shop steward on two counts.

The ET panel found that Owolade was unfairly dismissed, because he had been sacked for taking part in trade union activities, and that he had been victimised because he supported staff claims that the management of the now-defunct Lambeth community alarms service (LCAS) was racist – a view confirmed in July by a public inquiry (*Eye* 1086).

Lambeth council went to extraordinary lengths to bad-mouth the American civil rights team representing Owolade. A week before the ET announced its decision Lambeth released a 147-page dossier containing details of "links" between some of Owolade's American legal team and left-wing groups in the States. Seven years ago, apparently, one of Owolade's lawyers, Jodi Masley, was involved in anti-Ku Klux Klan protests. Shocking! In June this year members of his legal team helped win a victory in the US supreme court on "affirmative action". Appalling!

Taking into account the cost of the public inquiry, legal fees, officer time and paying a consultant, Alan Pickstock, £500 per day to deal with LCAS and Owolade issues, the episode will have cost council taxpayers several hundred thousand pounds. A figure which will rise should Lambeth be forced to award compensation to those LCAS staff whose complaints of racism fell on deaf ears, save those of Owolade. And the ET panel has yet to determine the level of compensation payable to Owolade.

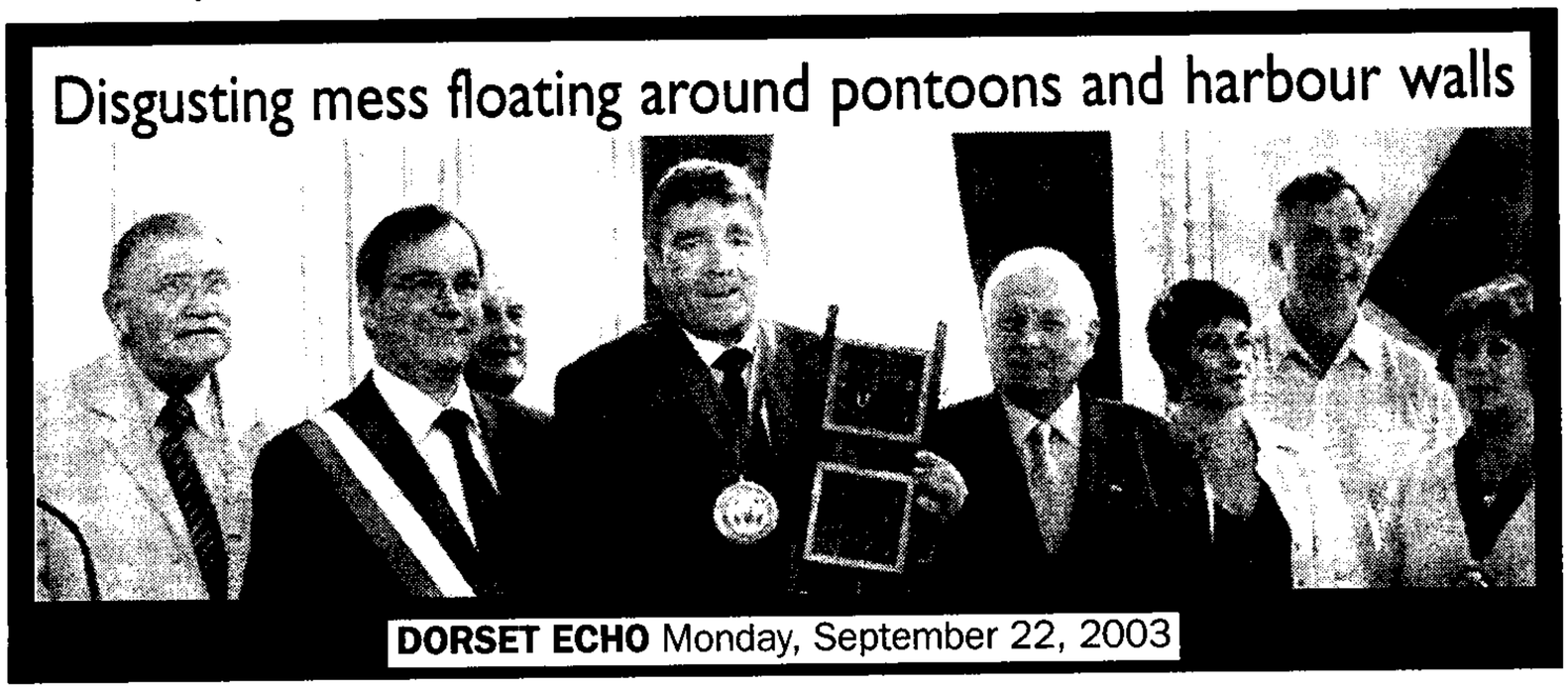
ANTI-SOCIAL SERVICES

THE government's mad plan to force councils to open files on every child in Britain (and include details of parental relationships, drink or drug habits, mental health problems and criminal records) would probably not have helped Toni-Ann Byfield, the seven year old who was shot dead on a visit to her drug-dealer father in London while she was supposed to be in the care of Birmingham social services.

Creating and monitoring such a database and ensuring that the relatively small number of vulnerable children are identified will be a mammoth, not so say impossible, task. Birmingham social services department, which should have alerted its counterpart in Brent to Toni-Ann's presence, is already chronically short of social workers and there aren't enough child guardians in the city either.

Birmingham council has a staggering 100 vacancies for social workers, despite an overseas recruitment campaign which found 50. Staff are already overworked and under-resourced with a backlog of unallocated child-care cases. There is a similar picture in the west Midlands at Cafcass, the body which appoints guardians to help children like Toni-Ann through court and custody cases.

The Toni-Ann case is not the first error by Birmingham social services to have had tragic consequences. In July last year a mentally-ill mother, Mirlene Stewart, begged the department to take her 23-month-old son, Jordan Reid, into care. She was ignored. Weeks later she took a train to Pembrokeshire and drowned Jordan in the sea.



EDUCATION NEWS

AROUND 700 fewer pupils are playing truant each day, says education minister Ivan Lewis, revelling in the "success" of the three-year, £470m Behaviour and Attendance Strategy.

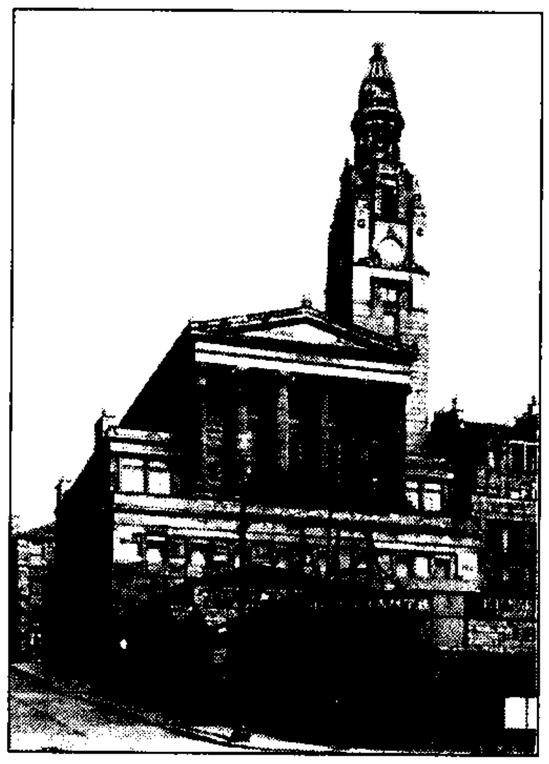
Based on an academic year of 195 schooldays, that's a cost of £1,150 per pupil, per day to get those truants back to school. The money has gone on national truancy sweeps which picked up 16,000 youngsters (most of whom were with parents) and on starting the prosecution of 1,500 parents of persistent truants.

Despite all this, only 700 more youngsters are back in the classroom. In July Lewis pledged to reduce truancies by 10 percent by May 2004. Given that approximately 20,000 kids bunk off school each day, at the current rate of spending, reaching the target will cost another £900m-plus!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE St Vincent Street Church is a landmark in the centre of Glasgow and the only intact survivor of what were, according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "three of the finest Romantic Classical churches in the world" designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson – one of the two extraordinary talents generated by the city in the 19th century.

I discussed its deplorable condition in 1990 (*Eye* 755); after that, neglect by its owner, Glasgow district council, continued. Thugs employed by the incompetent estates department charged in 1993 with making this grade "A" listed building "safe" actually smashed mouldings and details on the external stonework (without listed building consent, of course). In 1997 the World Monuments Fund, based in New York, put the St Vincent Street Church on its Watch List of the World's 100 Most Endangered Sites. This, at long last, shocked the council and others into action, and restoration began with stone replacement on Thomson's extraordinary exotic steeple.



Now the World Monuments Fund has put the church *back* on its Watch List. This is almost unprecedented and suggests exasperation with what is now Glasgow city council. Since work was completed on the tower, nothing more has happened; the roof continues to leak and neglect continues. When, recently, an adjacent tower block was reclad and "refurbished" as flats, no measure was taken to protect the church.

A trust set up to look after the building has sunk into inactivity. The impression is given that while lip-service is paid to the importance of C.R. Mackintosh, because tourism and the "Mockintosh" industry generates money, nobody really cares about the surviving work by the other local hero who many believe was one of the greatest and most original minds in Scottish architecture.

Yet the St Vincent Street Church is not redundant. It is used by a Free Church congregation which, for many years, has in vain tried to negotiate a proper lease with the council. This, combined with the refusal of the convener of the Alexander Greek Thomson Trust to consider any future use of the building which involves the Free Church continuing to use it for the purpose for which it was designed, suggests a degree of sectarian prejudice among some members of the Labour establishment which runs Glasgow.

Worse, perhaps, is that the congregation has repeatedly asked its landlord to install fire detection and prevention systems – again in vain. Given that both of Thomson's two other modern Temples of Solomon perished by fire (one by enemy action; the other by local vandals), this looks like worse than carelessness.

The World Monuments Fund's renewed concern over "Greek" Thomson's great monument suggests that not only are historic buildings still at risk in Glasgow but also that "Glasgow's Miles Better" and the other attempts to improve the character and behaviour of what was European City of Culture in 1990 and the Arts Council's UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999, were all just hype.

THINKING of churches, the Church of England, supported by the Ecclesiological Society and others, is launching a campaign to end the scandal of VAT being charged on repairs to historic church buildings – which costs the CofE some £6m a year on its listed buildings alone.

I have repeatedly banged on about the absurdity of 17.5% VAT being charged on repairs to buildings while new build, or extending (and possibly spoiling) old buildings is zero-rated. There can be no logic in government deciding that certain old buildings are of value to the nation and then penalising their owners when they try to maintain them.

I had always assumed the refusal of successive governments to reform this tax (and ideally have a flat rate of VAT for all work, whether repairs or new build) was due to the devious, complacent philistinism of the treasury, which has always blamed Brussels. But I was wrong: the villains really are in Brussels.

A few years ago, the government made a concession over imposing VAT on repairs to listed buildings by making churches eligible for grant aid which effectively reduced this tax – but insisted that this was only a temporary measure until the European commission agreed to a change in the VAT system. Now bureaucrats of Brussels have decided: non.

Why the European commission should wish to discourage the repair and maintenance of Europe's historic buildings I cannot think. The only good thing about its attitude is that it wants to impose VAT on church extensions as well, which might discourage all those hideous coffee lounges that feature so often in this column.

For the sake of all our church buildings (and other historic buildings) readers should protest – by writing to their own MEP and to Christa Randzio-Plath MEP, chairman and rapporteur on Lower Rate VAT, Batiment Altiero Spinelli 12G306, Wiertzstraat 60, B-1047 Bruxelles; e-mail: crandzio@europarl.eu.int.

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Richmond-upon-Thames*

Submitted by Barbara Huckerby Hall. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ASK anyone in the classical CD industry and they'll admit – on or off the record – that their world is in crisis. But it's beginning to look as though total collapse is nearer the truth.

Figures just produced by the British Phonogram Industry (BPI) show classical sales at a 20-year low: a mere 5.5 percent of the CD market. Record companies are off-loading artists with a vengeance – one new victim being Chloe Hanslip, the young violinist Warner Classics had not long ago been trumpeting as its great star on the horizon.

In desperation the companies are shifting their efforts into packaging as "classical" the easy-listening likes of Russell Watson and assorted film scores. As a disillusioned recording executive admitted privately last week: "If I'd known I'd end up pushing crap like this in the name of serious music, I'd have become a dentist."

The end, it seems, is indeed nigh – confirmed by one imminent Warner release. Having sacked Chloe Hanslip, Warner has taken on a black opera singer who, under the name Anthony Garfield-Henry, had a small-time career with fringe companies and Raymond Gubbay shows. Repackaged as Tony Henry, he has just recorded a disc of pop standards like *Hero* and *Everybody Hurts*, sung "operatically" with full choral and symphonic backing and (this is the killer) the words translated into Italian to provide what a spokesman calls "classical gravitas".

At the recording session the other week, the hired-in chorus could barely sing for laughing at the absurdity of it all. It may be some small comfort for Chloe Hanslip that if this is what her former record company considers worthwhile, she's better off without them.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

His technique was so revolutionary that it's hard to say exactly what it represents.
My problem exactly!
ARTS
TURNER'S PAINTINGS OF VENICE REALLY OF PORTSMOUTH!
That's genius for you.

Letters

Royal & Sunset Alliance?

Sir,

While certain of the "richest and most powerful (companies) in the land" may indeed be planning to evade Red Dawn, to place Royal & Sun Alliance in this group is surely an error. The company's market cap has fallen by 87 percent in the last five years! The only way it will be rich again is through the largesse of its existing shareholders and a penchant for rights issues!

MICHAEL SONES,
Analyst, European Metals & Mining,
Citigroup Smith Barney.

Doesn't add up

Sir,

Using the logic of Graham Bland (county music adviser for Somerset) whereby he seeks to justify the eradication of classical music at school level because only 4 percent of the public buy classical CDs, compared to 59 percent who buy rock and pop, then schools can happily dispense with mathematics from the curriculum. I don't know the figures, but I would be surprised if more than 0.4 percent, let alone 4 percent of the public bought books on mathematics.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT PARKER,

Nottingham.

Bright sparks

Sir,

In Pseuds Corner of your last issue you published a press release which included the sentence, about Richard Appignanesi, "the most intelligent man in Britain according to Melvyn Bragg". I can't recall ever meeting Richard Appignanesi or reading his work. I wish him well but I did not call him, nor would I call anyone, "the most intelligent man in Britain".

Yours sincerely,
MELVYN BRAGG,

LWT.

Boxing clever

Sir,

Chris Eubank's remark, "journalism is to literature what excrement is to food", seems to me a fitting and well-turned aphorism for our time. I was sorry to see it in Pseuds Corner. Is Hackwatch now preparing to turn soft on the prurient eavesdroppers of the tabloids and the self-obsessed columnists of the broadsheets?

Yours faithfully,
JONATHAN GUINNESS,

Cirencester.

"Gap year kids, I expect"

Graves errors

Sir,

Re: Padi Whacked, Eye 1089. David Graves' death was a very sad event. He was obviously a well-liked colleague who is missed by those who knew him.

Your article, however, misses a few points:

Mr Graves wasn't forced into going on the press junket. He wasn't forced to dive. He wasn't forced to ignore his training and stray from the group. He wasn't forced to ignore his training by ignoring his cylinder contents gauge.

Despite the apparent lack of attention from the divemasters there has to be a concept of personal responsibility somewhere down the line. Mr Graves was a qualified diver. His training warned him of the dangers of scuba diving, so why didn't he apply commonsense, obey his training and, in a hostile alien environment with only limited duration life support apparatus, check his air frequently?

That he had a close call on the first dive and yet apparently failed to check his limited supply of air on the second beggars belief. Why do you, and some divers, assume that no matter what happens under water, somebody else will bail you out?

I'm confused by your organ's attitude to this sad event. You seem reluctant to accept the inquest jury's decision and imply that the "gross negligence manslaughter" verdict offered would have been more appropriate, despite your history of highlighting coroners pressuring jurors to return verdicts they're unhappy with. Also, have you lost your attitude towards personal responsibility?

I'm deeply sorry for Mr Graves' family's loss but also want to stem the rapidly increasing flow of liability litigation, which seems based on the inability of anybody to accept personal risk, even when voluntarily in obviously hazardous situations.

Yours reluctantly,
MARK PAPP (erstwhile diving instructor),

Wembley, Middlesex.

Lookalike

Munster

McCartney

Sir,

I wonder whether David Blaine-baiter and sometime artist, poet and musician Paul McCartney has anything in common with man-made Herman Munster from the venerable American TV series The Munsters.

Yours sincerely,
ENA B. RUSHTON,

E. Twickenham.

Legal niceties

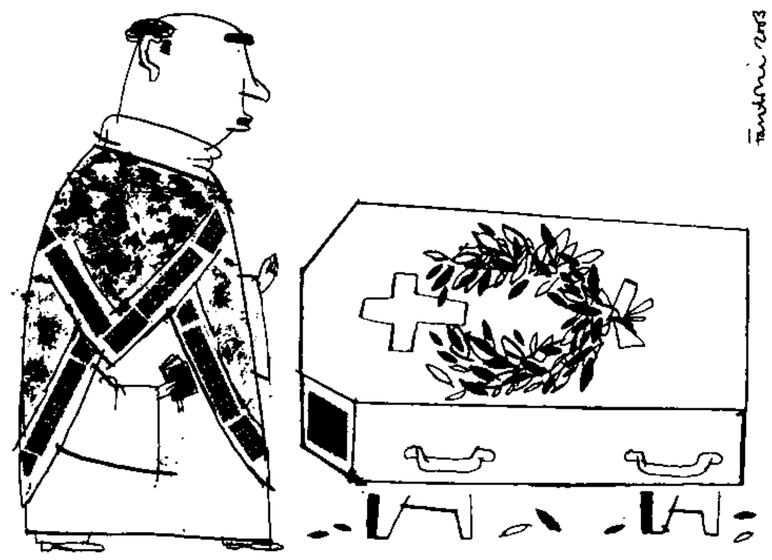
Sir,

At the risk of hampering my chances of winning, it should be pointed out that there is a glaring error in the Eye Crossword 244, clue 13 down: "Porn my arse" snapped 6 [Private Eye] (5,5). This gives the anagram Perry Mason. It should be pointed out that Perry Mason was not a private eye, but an attorney, who actually employed a private eye called Paul Drake. These things have to be clarified.

Yours,
MALCOLM YOUD,

Wickford, Essex.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Given that I never met the deceased, or had even heard of him until yesterday, I'll skip the eulogy and go straight to the committal"

Ex libris

Sir,

Michael A.J. Brough is misguided in directing his wrath towards the staff of Liverpool City Libraries (Eye 1088). Music librarians, in my experience, are not "clueless" as he asserts – underestimated, undervalued and, certainly, underpaid, but otherwise caring, intelligent and hard-working. However, those who work in public libraries have the misfortune to be local government officers which means that they are required to take instructions from councils and committees populated by individuals such as Cllr Mike Storey, CBE (Eye 1087), hence the dispersal of what was once a great music library.

The selling-off of library stocks throughout the country has been going on for some time and both booksellers and private collectors have been benefiting from the process but I have yet to hear any of them complain (the Prokofiev was a snip at either price). The only parallel event in our history would seem to be the loss of libraries incurred as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. However, when considering that lamentable event, no one blames the nuns and monks but, rather, Henry VIII and his minions, who were the real villains.

Yours in both sorrow and anger,
MIRIAM MILLER,

Via email.

Sir,

I was fascinated to read Michael J.A. Brough's letter in Eye 1088.

Mr Brough should not, however, blame Liverpool's education system for the sale of the music department in the city's Central Library. Liverpool has always had some excellent schools and has been very forward-looking in its musical education. Plenty of Liverpool people were only too pleased to take advantage of the Music Library sale. I purchased a dozen of its books in 1998.

This gave me the chance to check Cllr Storey's statement that the items which had been "sold off recently hadn't been requested for up to 60 years". My purchases were books about music, rather than music itself. Most had had their borrowing-plates removed. However, my copy of Jan Chiapusso's "Bach's World" was only published in 1968 and George Martin's "Verdi, His Music, Life and Times" was published in 1965. Harman and Milner's "Man and His Music" still contained a record of lendings: it was last borrowed from the library on April 23, 1996.

Arithmetic never was my strong point, but "up to 60 years"?

*Perhaps Cllr Storey should check **his** arithmetic! Something definitely does not add up.*

Yours faithfully,
JANE PERCEVAL,

Liverpool.

Capital letter

Sir,

So, you think the London Underground is crap, do you? I had occasion to spend some time in London recently, and I couldn't believe the fast, efficient and cheap service the Underground provided. Would that we benighted country dwellers had anything one tenth as good.

My God, you want to try getting around in rural Shropshire without a car. I live on a major trunk road, and can look forward to an hourly bus service to the nearest town (Shrewsbury), which knocks off at 7pm, (so a night out at the pictures or in town is out of the question), and doesn't run on Sundays at all, and you think you're badly done to!

Yours in high dudgeon,
DAVE JONES,

Shrewsbury.

"I'm keeping you busy while my mates bulldoze your home"

Petal fatigue

Sir,

Bob Flowerdew? If Martin Radford had listened through to the end, he would know the producer of Gardeners' Question Time was "Jo King".

JILL BOLTON,

Warrington.

LUVVIES

Redgrave [Vanessa] tells me that the Regency period comes as second nature to her because when she was a teenager a friend of her parents, the Byron scholar and costume historian Doris Langley Moore, lent her a set of period underwear. She wore it and immediately experienced an intensely physical connection with the past.

Telegraph Magazine

Submitted by Lois Stock.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Axis to grind

Sir,

I am somewhat bemused with the preoccupation you seem to have with Syria. In the last (current) issue you refer to it as part of the Bush "axis of evil". Actually it was never named as such.

While your attention to the sales of weaponry to certain countries is laudable, why do you just pick on Syria? There are plenty of other countries with regimes far nastier and with a proven record of abuse of human rights? Did you notice that the Rev Bliar changed the law in the UK to enable components to be sold to Israeli F16s?

Actually, the only thing that seems to distinguish Syria from the majority of the crowd is that it is not an American vassal state. So has Private Eye signed up to the "Project for a New American Century"?

Regards etc,
NAME WITHHELD,

Via email.

Border trouble

Sir,

Re Grilled Trout (1088) and Tim Hall's letter. Immigration is an emotive issue but to accuse the UK Immigration Service of being "racist and xenophobic" is ridiculous. I have often wondered why they are under-funded to tackle the large numbers of illegal immigrants and failed asylum applicants in the UK. Attitudes like Tim Hall's perhaps explain the lack of will to tackle this problem.

Yours faithfully,
MATTHEW POLLARD,

London.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

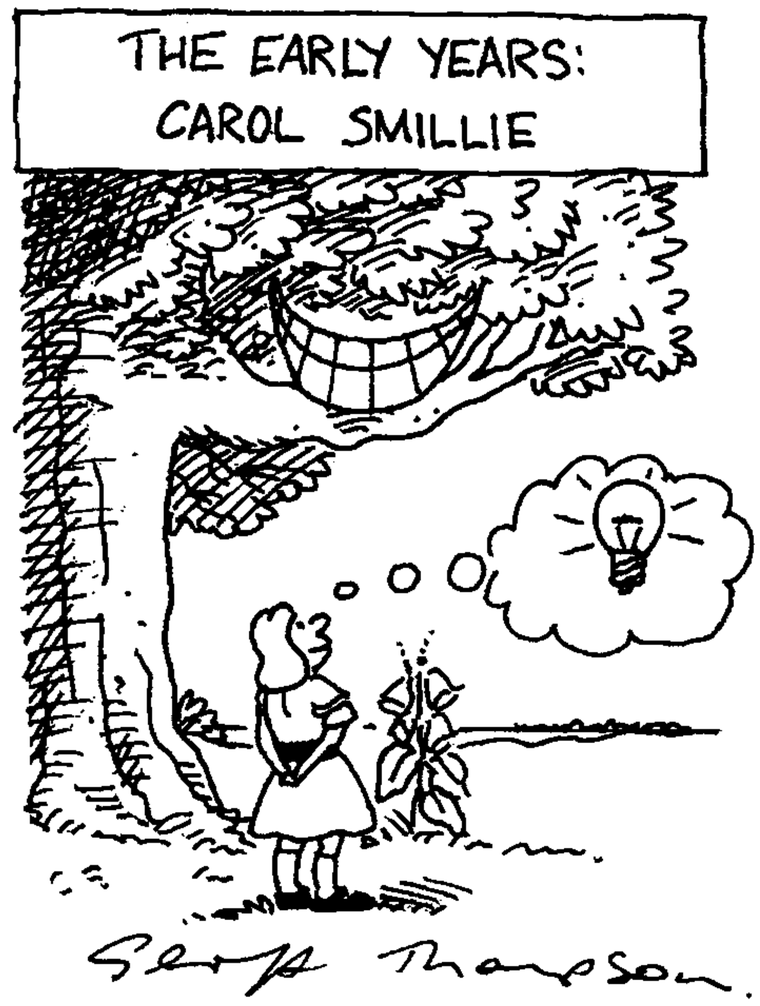
"We are talking about families literally dissolving in a sea of alcohol."
LORD ADEBOWALE, BBC website
(Laura Williams)

"Our raison d'etre is to perform in English..."
PAUL DANIEL (English National Opera), Radio 4
(Charles Petri)

"Henman's injured shoulder has raised its ugly head again"
JONATHAN OVEREND, Radio 5 Live
(J. Heath)

"He's started anticipating what's going to happen before it's even happened."
GRAEME LE SAUX, BBC1
(Richard Cunningham)

"Like everybody else, I've got four children..."
DAVE STEWART, BBC London News
(Andrew Stilwell)



A for effort

Sir,

Whilst I understand that more candidates getting the top grade at A level does make things more difficult for the admissions tutors (and others) to differentiate between candidates, perhaps so close to results day is not the best time for these views to be aired.

I took my A levels this year and my sister her GCSEs and around the two results' days any form of news broadcast or the like was banned from the house to avoid the usual scorn that is poured upon the high achievers. Whilst there are undoubtedly problems with the A level system perhaps people could take into account the feelings of the students who have worked hard for the grades they got. It is hardly their fault that more students are getting the top grades.

Incidentally, with the introduction of the new AS level system, you get marks as well as grades for both your AS and A levels, so I now have marks out of 600 for each A level which should make distinguishing between 2 "A" candidates fairly simple now.

Yours faithfully,
A HIGHLY-STRUNG TEENAGER,

Via email.

Sir,

I think James Le Grys has every right to defend the validity of A levels. I took my A levels not-so-long-ago and I find the annual "...exams are so are much easier – they really meant something back in our day..." demoralising crap. (And not forgetting the classic line, "we walked four miles to school everyday come wind, rain or shine".)

It's about time these small-minded, pathetic hacks recognise that results have improved mainly because students work longer and harder than their generation ever did.

Yours sincerely (and mildly irritated),
THOMAS LAMB,

Via email.

Sir,

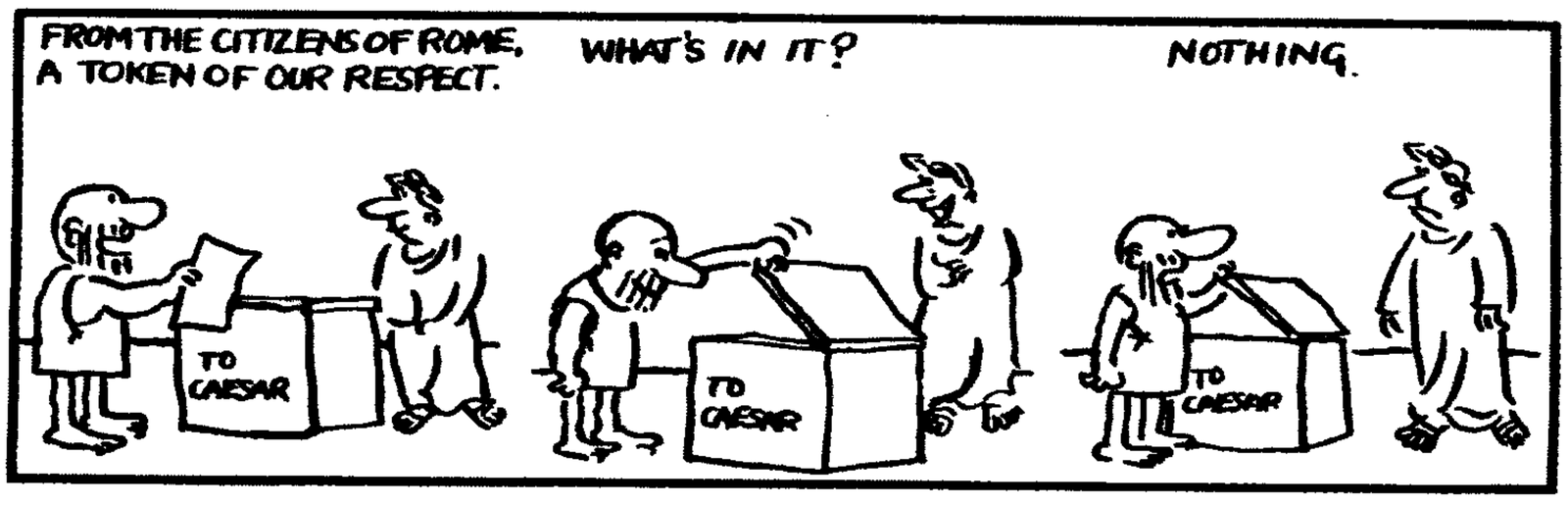
Despite only holding a mathematics GCSE rather than the 1950s-style O level I am still able to ascertain that the five out of the 28 pupils entered for O levels in the Channel Four documentary "That'll Teach 'Em" series who failed all four exams could hardly be counted as the "vast majority" as Stuart Cooper suggests (Letters, 1089). In fact, more pupils passed all of the O levels (7) than failed all of them.

Yours,
ALEX MASTERS,

Via email.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Tindouf**

from Our Own Correspondent

WE DON'T have oil, we don't have powerful friends and we don't look good on TV. So more than 100,000 of us refugees from Western Sahara are waiting – and waiting – in tents and mudbrick houses here in Algeria. We want to see if a truce agreed in 1991 will truly end the 28-year war with Morocco for control of Western Sahara.

In the broiling summer months we even miss our children, billeted by the thousand by Spanish families to escape the 50° heat and choking sand that clogs their lungs. When the Spanish scuttled out of their last African colony after Franco died, Moroccan troops poured south over the border. Pro-independence Polisario guerillas have been struggling to get them to leave ever since.

There should have been a UN referendum on self-determination within two years of the cease-fire. We are still waiting. Four years ago we thought there was a chance of a vote. Many of us sold our camels, bashed the zinc roofs of our shelters into containers for our goods and got ready to go home. There were demonstrations inside the territory, when Moroccan security and intelligence forces seemed wrong-footed by the death of King Hassan. He it was who ordered the invasion of land he insisted to be Moroccan and with whom there seemed little room for compromise.

Our children danced when he died. But, irony of ironies, now we rather wish the old tyrant had clung on for only he had the authority needed to withdraw from our lands without prompting a coup. Even if he wanted to, his timorous son dares not move. As Abdelaziz, our safari-suited leader, says, we have been the victims of three deaths: Franco's which delivered us up to our "brothers"; Algerian leader Boumedienne's which let Morocco off a negotiating hook; and Hassan's.

Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, and James Baker, the former US secretary of state who is the UN special representative to Western Sahara, have reheated an old proposal that would allow Moroccan settlers brought in after the 1975 invasion to determine the future of our country. That's a non-starter as the UN must know.

Morocco rejected Baker, Polisario's "yes" had some big "buts" and the UN resolution in July was the usual useless melange. But they've already spent $500m here and seem ready to do anything to keep the fiction of a peace process going. There was even talk that this time Polisario might call everyone's bluff and again take up arms. Everyone knows we are weak, but our radicals think the odds are changing in our favour, with Morocco shaken by the terrorist bombings in Casablanca earlier this year and endemic corruption and poverty.

But our leaders urge patience. They want to see how the dust settles after the Iraq storm. Some hope we might have more of a chance with the Americans, looking to settle a score with the French, who back Morocco. Spain might also be able to get us some credit with Washington after it backed the US so strongly over Saddam Hussein. Or is there a stitch-up in the making? Algeria, which houses our camps and is Polisario's main backer, has nudged the movement into saying it will look again at the Baker plan.

As the prospect of a real peace dwindles and our leadership dithers, it is little wonder nervous comparisons are made with the strength of radical Islamic groups in neighbouring countries and the increased interest in religious matters shown by our young people. So when Kofi Annan suggests that the UN security council might wash its hands of us, it's a threat he should use carefully. The millions spent by Minurso, the UN mission in Western Sahara, with its comfortable compounds and highly paid staff, have done nothing for us in the camps. Our relatives living under Moroccan rule inside the territory tell us by cellphone they are forbidden to walk on the same side of the street as the Minurso base. Patience is an exhaustible resource.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "The police received reports of a break-in at the house," Sue Kearsley-Evans, prosecuting, told magistrates in Bridgend, "and once inside, their police dog alerted them to the presence of someone hiding in the attic. On investigation, the defendant was found curled up in the roof space with no trousers or underwear on, and with the bottom half of his body covered in blue ink. He was dressed in the homeowner's pink shiny nightie, and also had a black lacy all-in-one female body suit at his feet, a torn white bra in his pocket, and a used condom stuck to his foot. He offered no explanation for his presence in the house, and was arrested on suspicion of burglary."

Kearsley-Evans was describing the unusual circumstances surrounding the arrest of Jamie Terrence Williams, aged 25, of Tanybryn. Gary Newbury, defending, explained that his client "had broken into the house with the intention of stealing scrap metal, but things seem then to have taken what can only be described as a bizarre twist. While searching for an old boiler to steal, he knocked something over on a shelf, and found himself covered in an inky substance. Naturally he took off his clothes, which were saturated, then grabbed some of the homeowner's clothes to mop up the ink, but only succeeded in smearing it all over himself. At that point, he heard the police arriving, so he naturally put on the pink nightdress, and stuffed the other garments into his pockets. As for the condom, he has no idea how it came to be stuck to his foot.

"This incident has been a painful lesson to Mr Williams. The ridicule, the smirking, and the name-calling behind his back will never go away. And he has had a great deal of explaining to do to his friends and close family. The whole thing was more like a farce than a burglary."

Williams was jailed for four months. *(Glamorgan Gazette, 10/7/03. Spotter: Sam Thomas)*

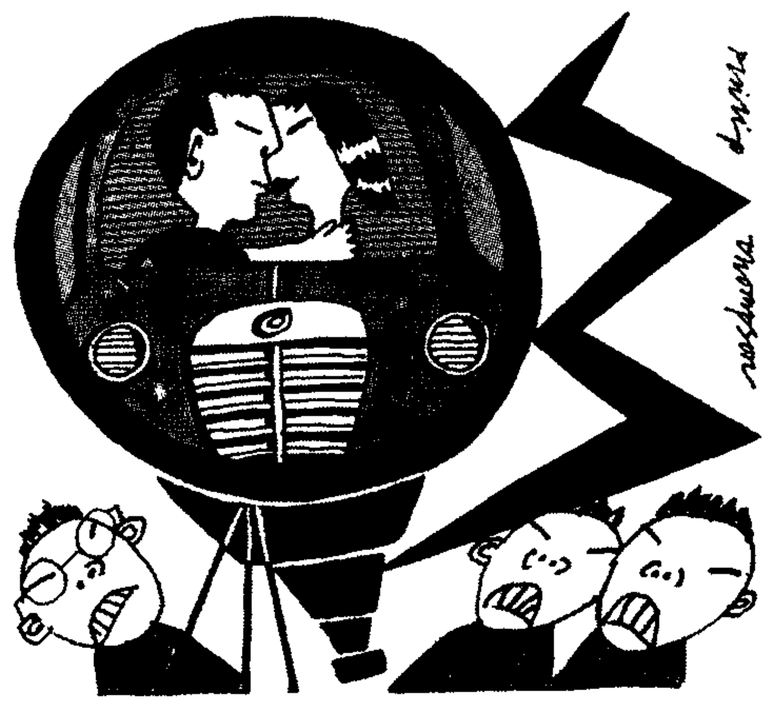
— ● —

● "What happened to Valdemar Lopes de Moraes was most unfortunate," Vanessa Guimaraes told reporters at the Montes Claros clinic in Minas Gerais (Brazil), "but it really wasn't our fault. He came to the clinic last week, suffering from ear trouble which was muffling his hearing, so we told him to sit in the waiting room until a doctor could see him. After a while, a nurse called out for 'Aldemar,' a patient who wasn't there. But Sr Moraes was, and he misheard, and thought she'd said 'Valdemar,' so he followed her into a consulting room where a doctor was performing vasectomies.

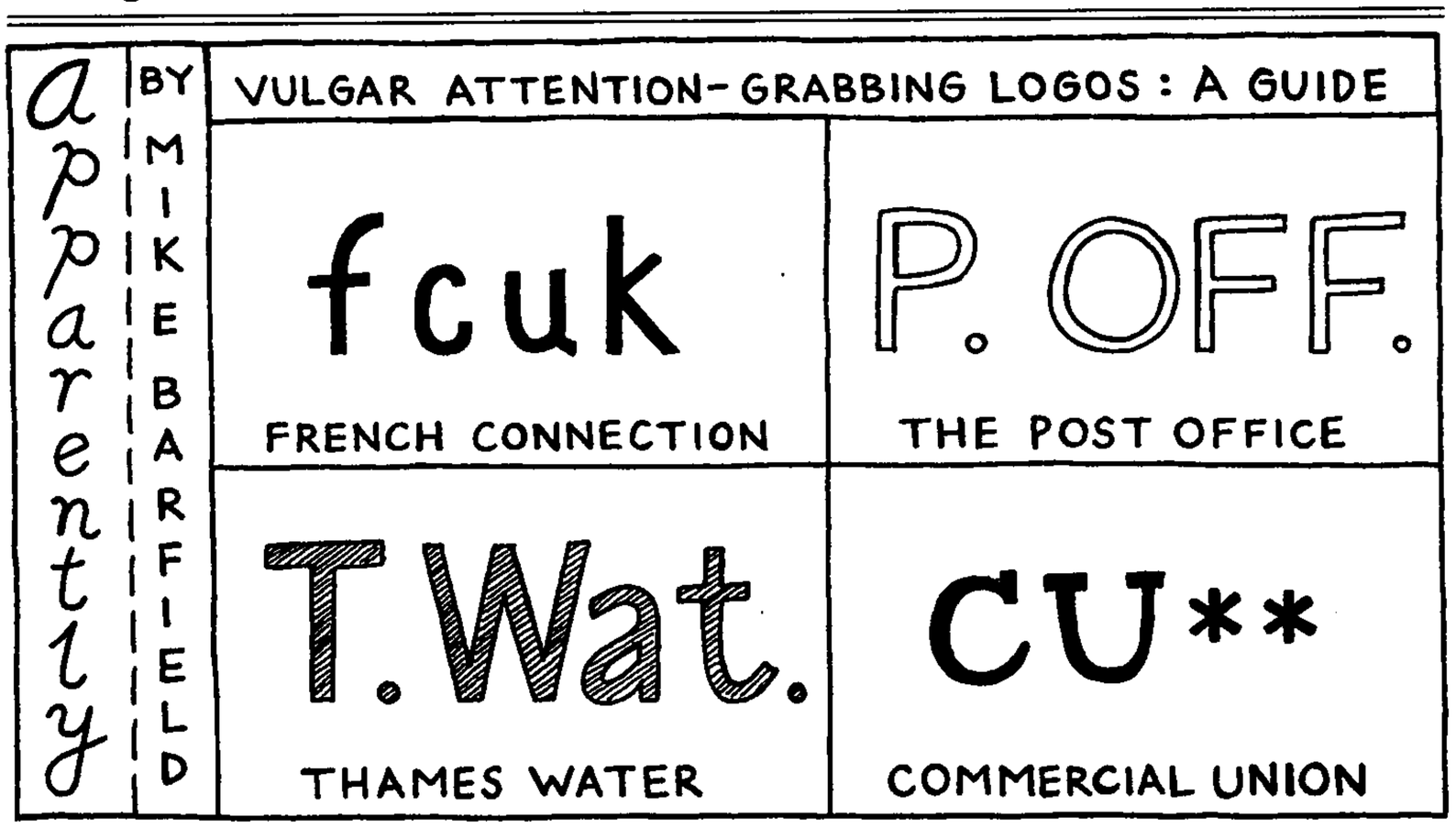
"The strange thing is that he asked no questions, even when the doctor asked him to remove his trousers, and started to shave his testicles. Apparently, he just assumed that his ear inflammation had reached as far as his genitals, and didn't even protest when the snip got underway. Odder still, he came back again yesterday, to get the ear examination he failed to get the first time. He said nothing about the vasectomy, but a local newspaper has reported that he is going to sue us, so we're awaiting a writ." *(Houston Chronicle, 21/8/03. Spotter: Tim Jackson)*

— ● —

● *"The hillside is a well-known area for young lovers," a spokesman for the Taipei police force told reporters, "and unfortunately it therefore attracts voyeurs. These three men were peeping toms, who liked to hide in an old broken-down hut with a large high-powered telescope, from where they could watch couples having sex in*



their cars. Yesterday afternoon, they were so engrossed in watching one couple's antics that they failed to notice that an electrical storm had begun. Until, that is, the metal casing of their telescope was struck by lightning. All three were hit at the same time, and only survived because they shared the impact of the super-high voltage. However, they were so shocked that they could not talk for several hours, and all three suffered serious burns to their hands and legs. After due consideration, we let them off with a caution, because it seemed that Mother Nature had already punished them enough." (Beijing Journal, August 2003. Spotter: Linnet Workman)



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon) (and not Mr Brown, Mrs Hewitt, Mr Blunkett, let alone Mr Cook!)

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "The Vicar's Not For Turning" *(Gospel according to St Margaret 19.90)*

Hullo!

And thank you all for making this year's annual parish outing to Bournemouth such a great success.

And what wonderful weather we had for it! It makes all the difference, doesn't it, when the weather is nice? Strolling along the front, watching all my friends from the Working Men's Club eating their fish 'n' chips – my favourite meal by the way.

And thank goodness everyone heeded my plea not to bring up silly topics that no one is interested in that all happened long ago – such as, Mr Hutton, Dr Mitty, the Rev. Dubya and all that boring war stuff!

We all know that what really matters is that we should sort out what's going on in our own parish, before worrying about things which don't really concern us, such as Iraq!

So let's focus on what's been going on here in St Albion's, shall we? And I don't mean Mr Hutton sitting there in the parish hall raking over a lot of dead ashes!

Do we really care about what Mr Campbell said to Mr Hoon about poor Dr Mitty? Or what Mr Campbell wrote in his diary about Mr Scarlett and Mr Gilligan?

Of course we don't! It's all water under the bridge!!

Let's hope we can all now concentrate on what is really important – ie, supporting your vicar so that he can support you!

As it says in the Good Book, "I am thy Vicar and thou shalt have no other vicar but me"! (Book of Exodus, but only in my own good time!)

Yours,

Tony

PS. I am told that poor Dr Mitty had quite a history of suicide in his family, so those people who are going around saying that I am to blame for his death should examine their consciences!

Whatever Mr Hutton may say (and, frankly, who cares?), it is now quite obvious that poor Dr Mitty had only himself to blame for his unfortunate death (along, of course, with Mr Hoon).

Confessions.....

■ **The Vicar will not be making any confession this week because he doesn't think he's done anything wrong. Other people like Mr Hoon may well wish to confess their sins and be given the sackrement, but the Vicar has been entirely in the right all along. Anyone who wishes to see the Vicar privately to make confession can come to the vicarage between 10am-11am on a Thursday and say three "Hail Maggies". T.B.**

New Creed For Use At Mass (Destruction)

We believe in Weapons, both visible and invisible, and in the mother of all bombs, which was conceived by the Reverend Dubya and was made up on earth then *(cont. p. 94)*

Also new from the Vicar

The Nunc Dimitty

Lord, don't lettest thou
thy servant depart at all.
Amen

Seasonal Meditation

Autumn is a sad time when all the hopes of spring and summer fade away and then decay. The leaves which were once so bright and so admired by everyone become tarnished and tired and eventually just drop off. But that is the way it must be and, fortunately, the story does not end there.

There is a new leaf waiting to take its rightful place in the vicarage, and everyone will say "Why wasn't this new leaf there all along? It's so much better than that old one!"

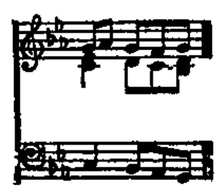
G.B. (The parish's 'mystery poet'!)

Harvest Festival

Mr Sainsbury wishes it to be known that he intends to ignore the silly petition signed by 99 percent of the parishioners, objecting to the decoration of the church with fish-flavoured marrows and 12-metre long blue carrots.

He has asked me to inform the congregation that there is no possible reason why we should not give thanks to the Lord (Sainsbury) for his bounteous gifts to the parish, made possible by the miracle of genetically-modified food products. We will, as usual, be singing the hymn

"We plough the fields and scatter
The GM seed on the land
And if it comes up luminous
Won't that just be grand?"



T.B.

Amateur Dramatic Society

Parishioners are particularly asked not to attend the latest production being staged in the Church Hall by our local thespians. Their new offering, *The Deal,* is a silly fantasy about a parish in which the vicar has agreed with the treasurer to hand over to him the running of the parish.

This totally implausible scenario is made even more unlikely by the portrayal of the vicar as a hypocritical, public-school type and the treasurer as an honest, down-to-earth Scotsman. Honestly, no wonder no one goes to the theatre any more, when this sort of thing is looked on as entertainment.

Vicar's Rating: 0 out of 10.

A WARNING TO PARISHIONERS FROM THE VICAR'S WIFE, MS CHERIE BOOTH QC

I would like to take this opportunity to warn all readers of this newsletter not to repeat the malicious slander recently put about that my life coach Ms Carole Caplin has been banned from the vicarage and her door key taken away and given back to Mr Mandelson. Ms Caplin and I are still the very best of friends and continue to enjoy our twice-weekly yoga workouts at the St Albion's Bio-energy and Holistic Pyramid Centre in Bonkers Road (the old Fire Station).

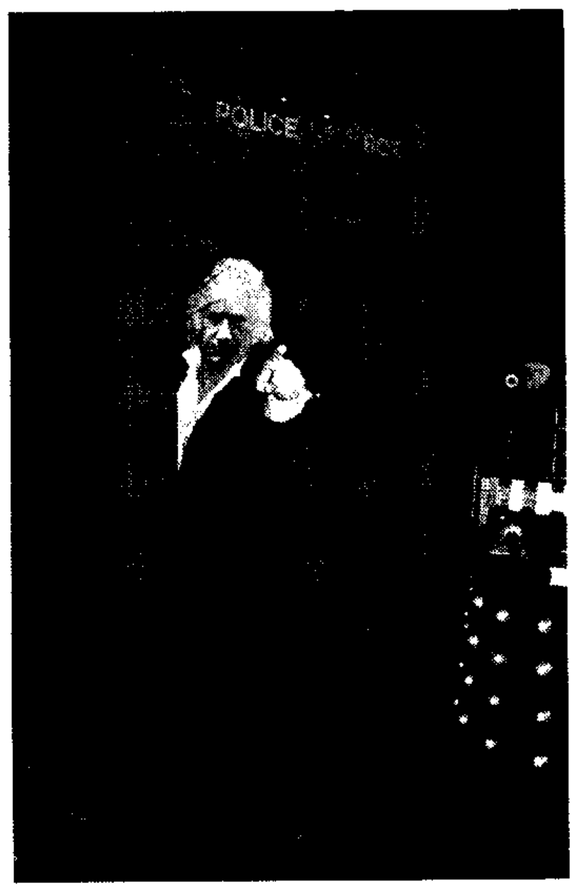
It is also not true that Carole *is* writing a book called *'How I Made A Fortune Out Of My Friendship With The Blairs'*. It is called *'How I Would Never Write A Book About The Blairs Like Mr Campbell'* and will contain nothing indiscreet or derogatory in any way, as per her contract agreeing that any breach of confidence might well lead to a reintroduction of the death penalty for treason and/or damages for ten billion pounds.

C. Booth, Matrix Chambers, C/o The Vicarage.

DR HOON IN NEW ADVENTURE

by Our Broadcasting Staff **Phil Schedules**

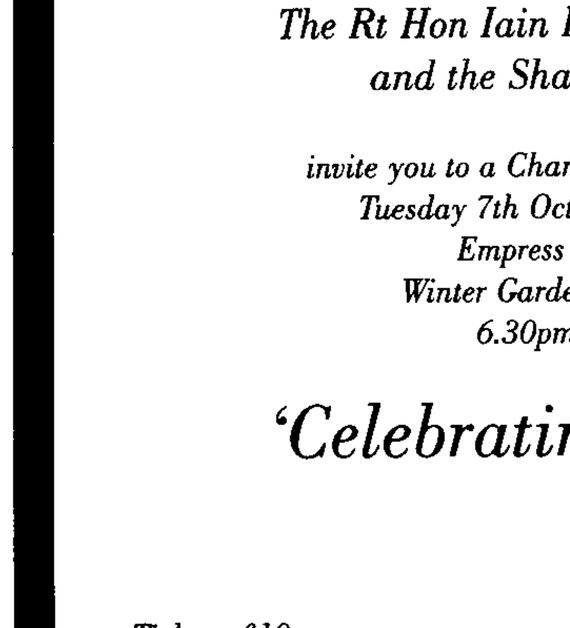
THE BBC is to bring back the unpopular character of Dr Hoon whose adventures entertained nobody for many years. In the new storyline, Dr Hoon with his lovely assistant Sir Kevin Tebbit, finds himself in a battle to the death with mysterious forces who are trying to "exterminate" him. Will Dr Hoon survive? No.



Cast In Full

Dr Hoon . . **Jonathan 'Upshit' Creek**
Sir Kevin Tebbit . . . **Norman Tebbit**
Greg Dyke . . . . . **Greg Dalek**
Done Time Lord . . . **Jeffrey Archer**
Waste-of-Time Lord . . . **Lord Hutton**
Man in Tardis . . . . . **David Frost**

The theme tune to Dr Hoon is provided by the Radio Phoney Workshop and composed by Andrew Gilligan.



BBC Radio 3

9.00 Opera Highlights: Rigoloutofit
by Romano Prodi, performed by the Eurostat Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Neil Kinnock.

10.30 Tomorrow
Concert Aria *'Nej'* performed by the Swedish Referendum Orchestra, not conducted by Sir Edward Heath.

■ *Note: New time schedules on Radio 3. The Morning Concert will now be in the Afternoon.*

The Leader of the Conservative Party
The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
and the Shadow Cabinet

invite you to a Champagne Reception on
Tuesday 7th October 2003 in the
Empress Ballroom
Winter Gardens, Blackpool
6.30pm – 8pm.

'Celebrating Success'

Tickets: £10

Apply before 1st October

Sponsorship kindly arranged by Lord Ashcroft KCMG

Invitation

"It's the new black!"

RED FLAG TO RETURN TO CONFERENCE

by Our Man In Bournemouth **TUC Biscuit**

THE traditional anthem of the socialist movement is to be reintroduced for this year's Labour Party Conference. In recent years, the great anthem, sung to the tune of Tannenbaum, has been thought to be too redolent of the old class-conscious Labour Party.

Now, by popular demand, the Red Flag is back and delegates will be given a special song sheet so that they get the words right.

Those Words In Full

♫ ***"The working class can kiss my arse,***
I've got the PM's job at last." ♫

© T. Blair.

What You Missed

The STEPHEN FRY Diaries

Thurs 24 October

Buttocky bummy bums with double arses! The Deutsche ZeeberNeu Bank promised to come up with a bridging loan to the NFCG who had agreed to part fund the venture capital requirement... oh bum bum arsety bum!

Tomorrow: Sodding bottoms bum arses! My film gets made.

© Sir Crispin Dry, The Sunday Telegraph 2003.

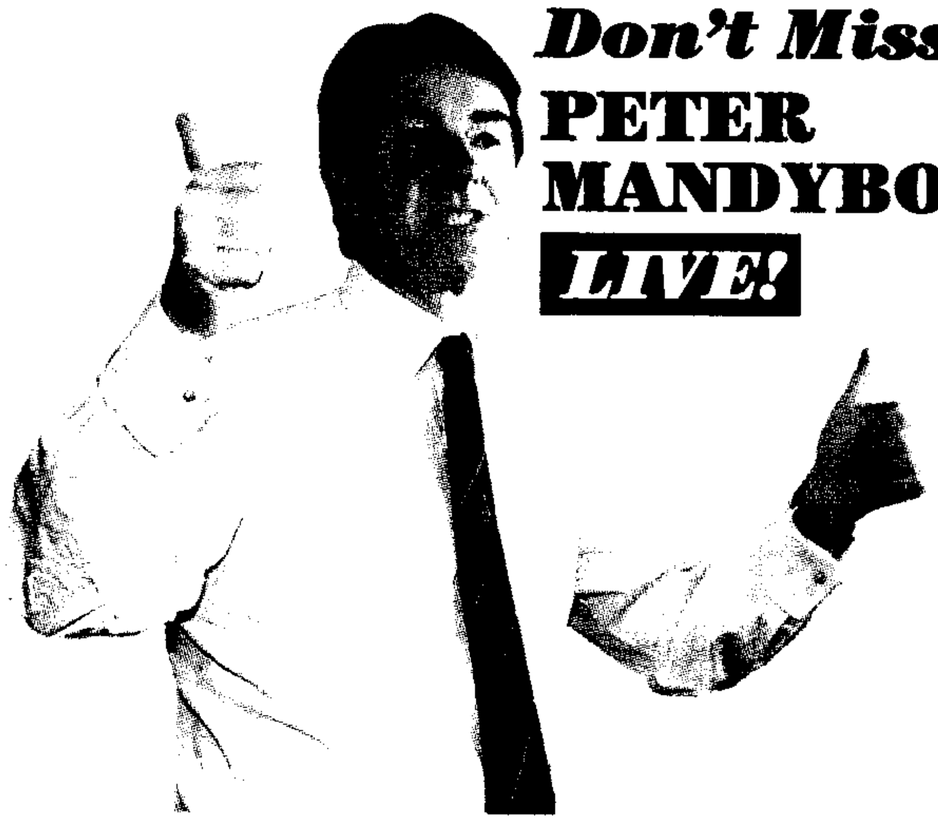
That All Purpose Gerald Scarfe Interview

Acid pen... biting satire... sixties... Private Eye... asthmatic childhood... Jane Asher... cakes... vitriol... Cheyne Walk... intensely private... marked contrast... sixties... Jane Asher... cakes...

© Gnome Interview. Digest Service. 2003

"I told you the DVD player needed attention"

THEATRE HIGHLIGHTS



Don't Miss
PETER MANDYBORE
LIVE!

Back in the West End after his long exile away from the bright lights, lovable comedian and TV star Peter is back. Will the old magic work? Will the public still fall for his routines? Or will they remember why he fell from grace and refuse to applaud?

- **Don't miss Mandybore's comeback appearance – book now before it all goes wrong and he has to give up his career again!!**

POETRY CORNER

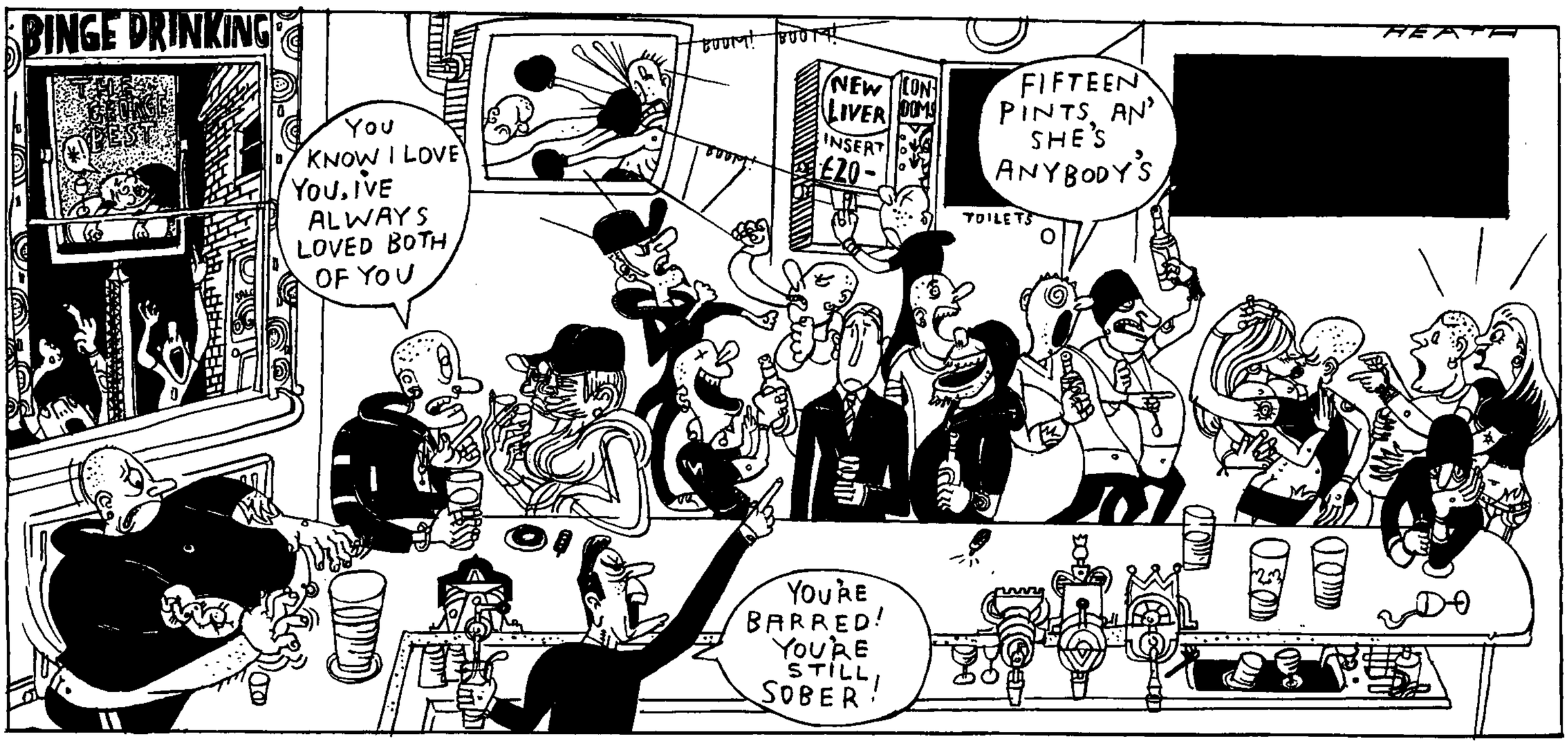
Lines On The Discontinuation of Nigel Dempster's Diary in the *Daily Mail*

So. Farewell
Then sixty-two-
Year-old Sherborne-
Educated diarist,
Formerly married to
The Lady Camilla, third
Daughter of the
Eleventh Duke of
Leeds, and third
Cousin, twice-removed, of
Her Late
Majesty, Queen
Elizabeth The Queen
Mother,
Currently being
Comforted, close
Friends tell me
By *(That's enough of this poem. Ed)*

E.J. Thribb, the
17½-year-old, Tooting-
Comprehensive-educated son
of the late Doris Thribb, the
third daughter of Hezekiah
Thribb and close friend of
Keith and his mother
(I said that's enough. Ed.)

Before a short service at Darlington crematorium on Tuesday of last week, his coffin was placed by the fireplace at the Town Hall and he was toasted by friends, family and former customers.

Darlington & Stockton Times



HUTTON INQUIRY

KEY WITNESSES RECALLED

DAY 994

AS LORD Hutton's inquiry neared its conclusion, a number of key witnesses were recalled to be questioned by top barrister Andrew Bandicoot QC.

First into the box was the enigmatic, taciturn, supremely confident Sir Scarlett Pimpernel, head of JIF (the Joint Intelligent Farrago).

Sir Scarlett had previously told the inquiry that he had been personally responsible for every detail of the dossier, published by No. 10 Downing Street on 21 September 2002, entitled *Saddam Is Going To Launch Nuclear Rockets And Poison Gas At London In 45 Minutes Unless We Do Whatever President Bush Says* (HMSO, £45).

Sir Coldicream: Sir Pimpernel, I draw your attention to this e-mail, dated 18 September, from the Chief of Staff at Number 10, Jonathan Powermad. It says, as you will see... *(rummages through several thousand files for some hours before locating the incriminating electronic message in question)*... "To Pimpernel from Powermad, urgent. We have a bit of a problem with paragraph 7143 of the dossier. Where it says 'Saddam has no weapons', we feel the word 'no' should be replaced with the words 'lots of'. This is, of course, entirely up to you, but the PM would be very grateful if you could see your way to underwriting the necessary amendment (as would your friend Alastair!)!"

Do you remember receiving this email?

Sir Scarlett: I believe that this is an accurate appraisal of the information available to me at this moment.

Sir Carrycot: Does it not contradict your previous evidence that Number 10 had no hand whatever in the final wording of the dossier?

Sir Scarlet-face: ...er ...um ...that remains my position. I see no contradiction between my previous statement and the exact opposite.

Sir Callcentre: And yet, Sir Redface, when we look at the dossier we find that the very changes urged on you by Mr Powermad were incorporated in the final version. Are you suggesting that this is to be attributed to mere coincidence?

Sir Pumpernickel: On the contrary, the changes were made entirely on my own initiative, following my receipt of new intelligence from a top secret source, namely Mr Powermad at Number 10.

Campbell Diaries Reveal Concern Over BBC Man

AMONG new evidence supplied to the inquiry yesterday was an edited version of the diaries of Mr Alastair Campbell.

Monday June 7

Meeting with TB and GH. We agree we can use Kelly to f* Gilligan. Then we can use Gilligan to f*** Kelly. Then we can use both of them to f*** the BBC. Then everyone will be f***ed except us. TB f***ing pleased.**

Tuesday June 8

F*!!! F***ing Kelly has f***ed up at the Committee. He was meant to f*** Gilligan, but instead he f***ed us, the stupid f***er.**

Saturday June 12

The sad death of Dr Kelly has robbed the nation of its finest and most dedicated public servants. I am deeply distressed by this tragic news, as are TB and GH.

PS. This diary is available to the highest bidder. Only offers in the region of £5 million or above will be considered.

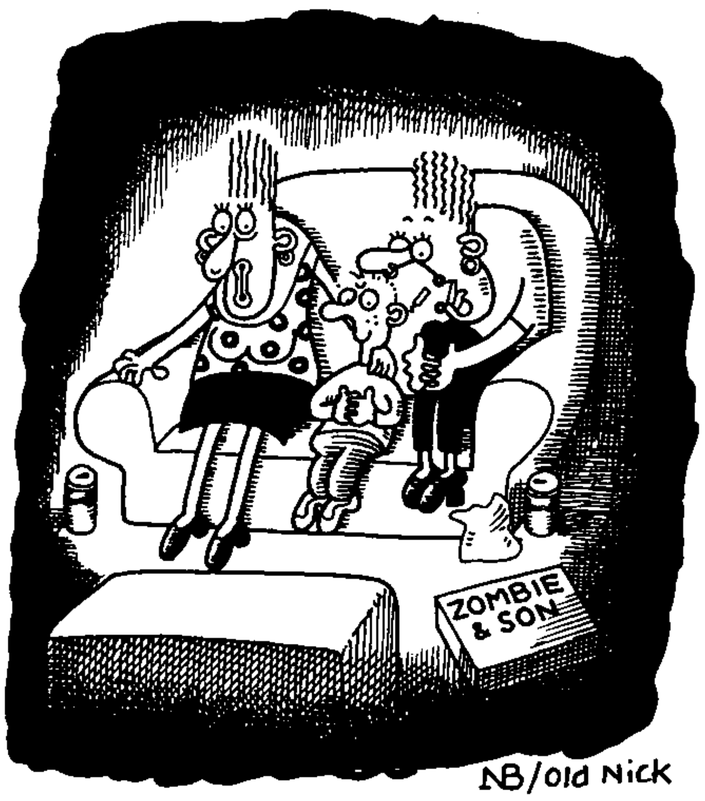
Campbell's Four-Letter Word Shock

LATE HUTTON INQUIRY NEWS

NEW documents released by the Hutton Inquiry have revealed that Dr David Kelly played a key role in the outing of Dr David Kelly as the key source for reports from Andrew Gilligan and Susan Watts.

"Apparently it had something to do with him meeting journalists in his lunch break every day, instead of going to Pret à Manger to buy a sandwich and then going back and eating it at his desk" said a stunned... *(cont'd p. 94)*

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES



Tracy, put the telly on (x3)
We'll watch some vids.

Suki, turn it off again (x3)
Too violent for the kids.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE UNBRIDLED ESCAPISM OF GOING TO SEE A REALLY TOP-NOTCH PUB TRIBUTE BAND!
LEAVE YOUR PRETENSIONS AT THE DOOR, LET YOUR HAIR DOWN AND PREPARE TO PARTY!!!
THIS GUY'S THE MOST AUTHENTIC KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN THIS SIDE OF BERLIN!
PLONK KLANG
WHIZZ PLINK DOING

"We did notice an improvement. We do a glutton-free sausage which contains no wheat products at all and a lot of our customers that are on the Atkins diet have been asking about it.

Macclesfield Times

TORIES FIND IDEAL CANDIDATE

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

TORY LEADER Iain Duncan Cough was over the moon yesterday at the achievement of his party in fielding what he called "our dream candidate" in the recent Neasden East by-election.

Said Cough, "Mrs Ramjam Hatterjee was just the sort of candidate the Tories have been looking for for years. She had everything – she was young, female, Asian, local and was a member of the caring community.

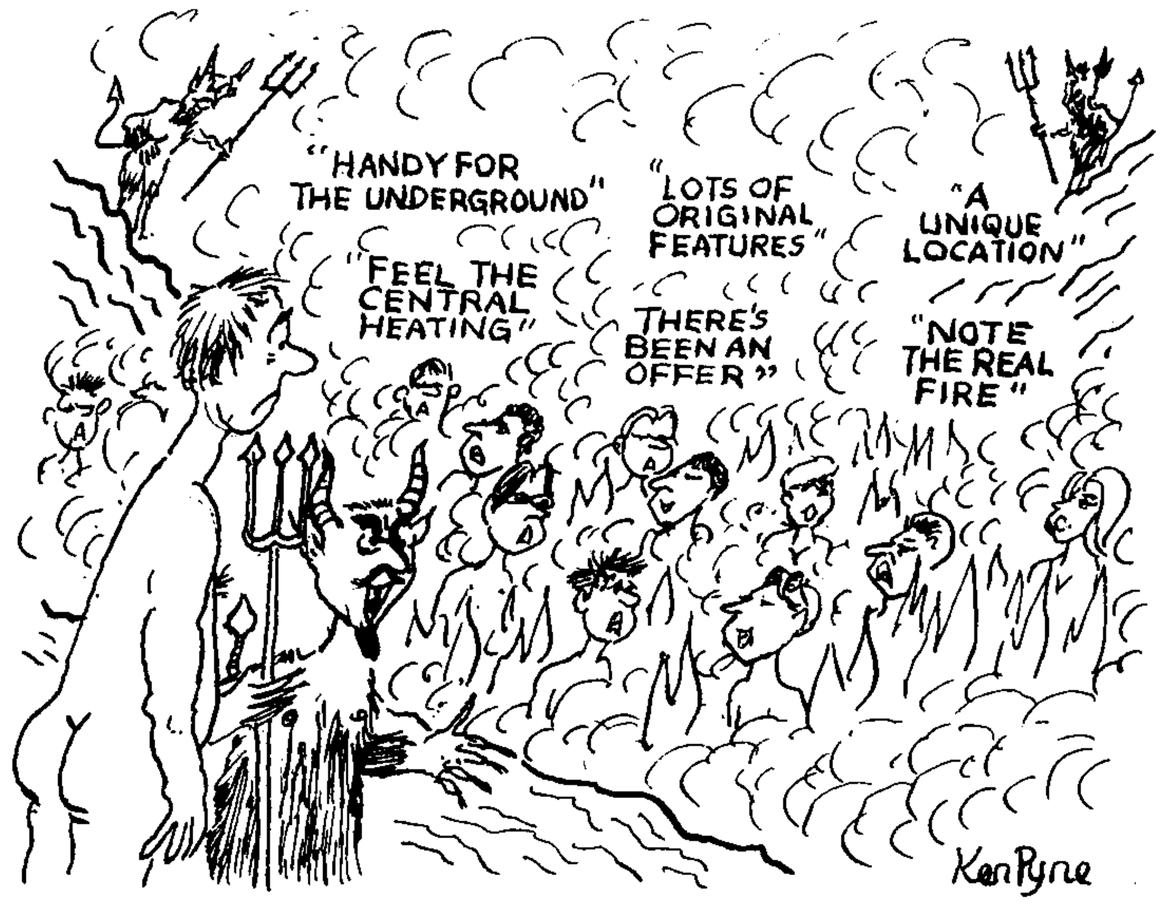
"She was also fearlessly honest", said Mr Cough, "in admitting that the Tories were hopeless and were bound to be humiliated."

Said Cough, "Mrs Hatterjee's prediction proved 100 percent correct. We need more candidates like her as we march towards extinction."

That By-Election Result In Full

Mandy Soppy (Lib Dem) **206**
Reg Snodd (New Labour) **103**
Trevor Windfarm (Green) **25**
Screaming Lord Lucan (Monster Raving Murderers) **3**
Mrs Hatterjee (Conservative) **0**

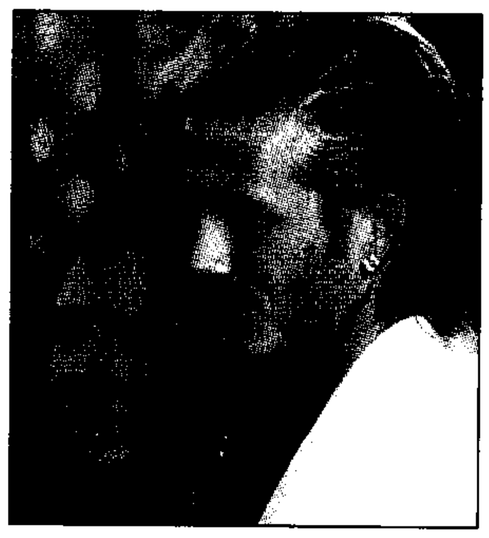
Turnout 2.4 percent
Lib Dem Gain



"And this is where we keep the estate agents"

The Daily Hate Mail

IS POSH AND BECKS' MARRIAGE IN TROUBLE?



by Entire Staff

PROBABLY not. We don't know and we've got no evidence, but let's ask the question anyway and fill up lots of space.

Tomorrow
Is Paul Dacre's marriage in trouble?

EU OFFICIAL NOT GUILTY OF FRAUD

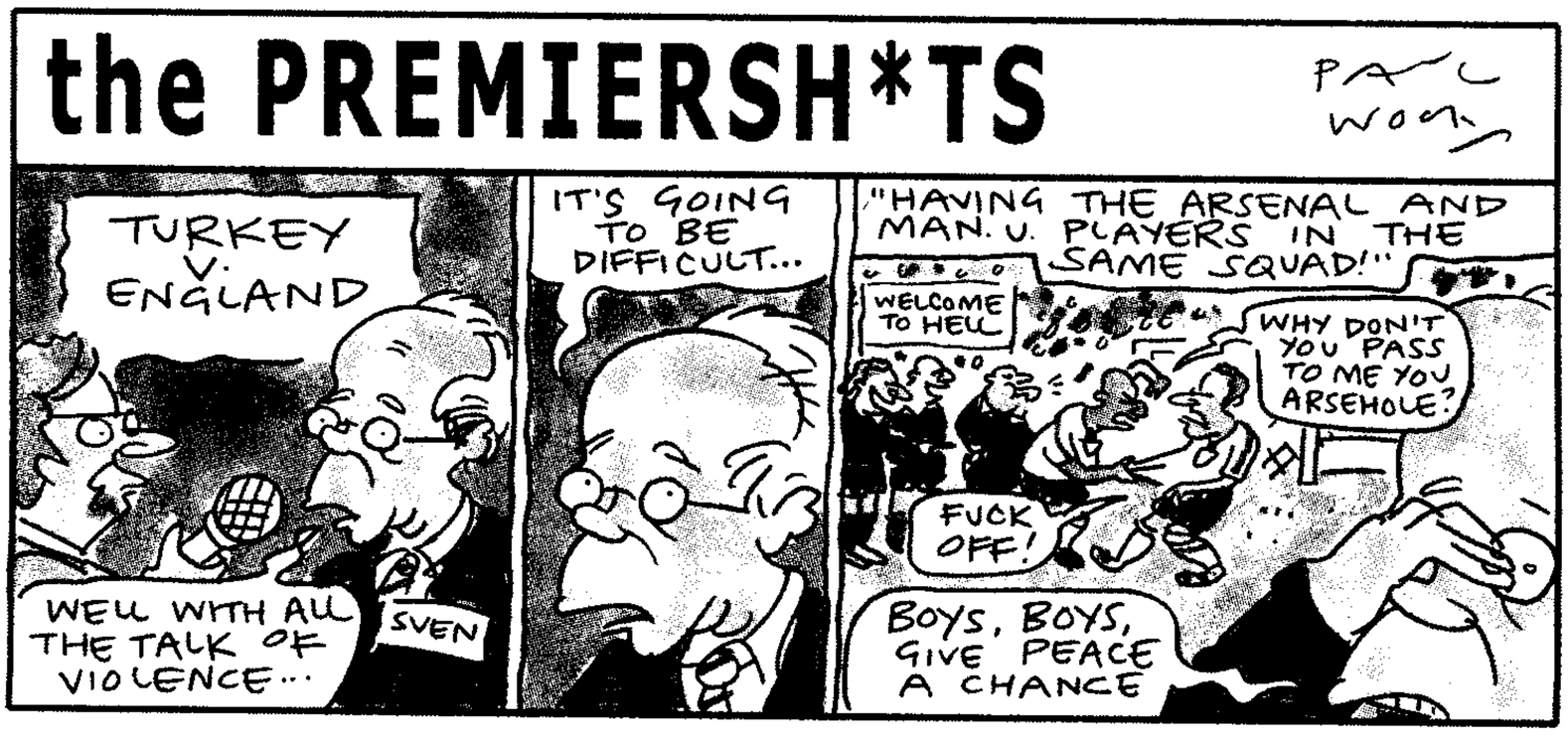
by Our Brussels Staff Phil Pockets

BRUSSELS was reeling last night after a shock new report revealed that an unnamed Luxembourg official working in the Paperclip Directorate of the European Commission had never committed a single corrupt or fraudulent act during his ten years working in Brussels.

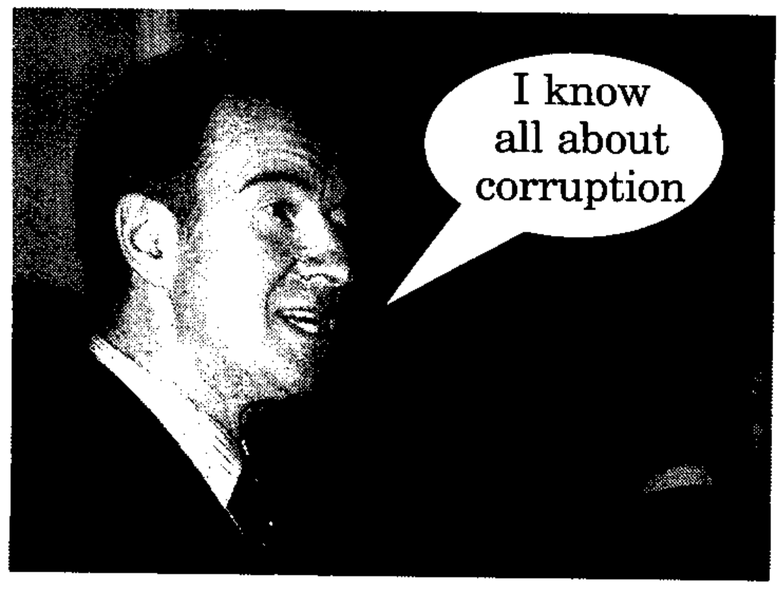
There were no "holes in his accounts". He had never "skimmed a contract". He had never appointed his brother-in-law's mistress to a single EU post.

EU Commissioners immediately called for his dismissal.

Said the EU's top fraud expert, Neil Kinnochio, "This is totally, utterly and utterly, totally outrageous. After all the good work that we have been doing to preserve the EU's reputation, along comes just one rotten apple like this, and the rest of us *(Cont'd. p. 94)*


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLLEY
TURKEY V. ENGLAND
WELL WITH ALL THE TALK OF VIOLENCE...
SVEN
IT'S GOING TO BE DIFFICULT...
"HAVING THE ARSENAL AND MAN. U. PLAYERS IN THE SAME SQUAD!"
WELCOME TO HELL
WHY DON'T YOU PASS TO ME YOU ARSEHOLE?
FUCK OFF!
BOYS, BOYS, GIVE PEACE A CHANCE

MANDY FOR EU JOB?



The two front pages that shamed a nation – how the Eye changed its front page following worldwide protests.

THE Eye

Friday October 3, 2003

Re-bonkers

BARMY BECKY'S GONE BONKERS!

by Eye Staff Dave Hack

YES, it's official! She's out of her tree! Onetime News of the World champion Rebekah Wade, 37, last night had to be locked up in a loony bin to stop her doing any more harm to herself or her newspaper.

Loony Becky finally flipped when she called Frank Bruno "bonkers" on her front page, prompting millions of calls from angry Sun readers.

Sexioned!

Said one close friend, "Becky is totally off her trolley. We had to call the police to get her into a straitjacket."

The Eye says:

'Blimey! What a mad cow!'

THE Eye

Friday October 3, 2003

Tragic victim

HELP THIS SICK WOMAN

by Eye Staff Dave Hack

BRITAIN's best-loved editor, Rebekah Wade, was last night fighting her biggest battle – against mental illness.

Friends say, "The strain of recent events in her life has taken its tragic toll. She is now so confused and bewildered that we are hugely relieved she is at last getting professional help."

The thoughts and prayers of the whole nation will be with Becky tonight as she takes on the ultimate challenge – a struggle for sanity.

So Sad

Said her trainer, "Dirty Digger" Murdoch, 82, "Rebekah is a feisty Sheila, but if she doesn't pull herself together pretty quick I'll kick her down the dunnee."

The Eye says:

'Mental illness is a serious problem in Britain today – so let's take it seriously.'

Clarke To End 'Blatant Bias' In University Entrance

by Our Education Staff *Lunchtime O'Level*

THE EDUCATION Secretary Charles Clarke today announced plans to make entrance to universities much fairer.

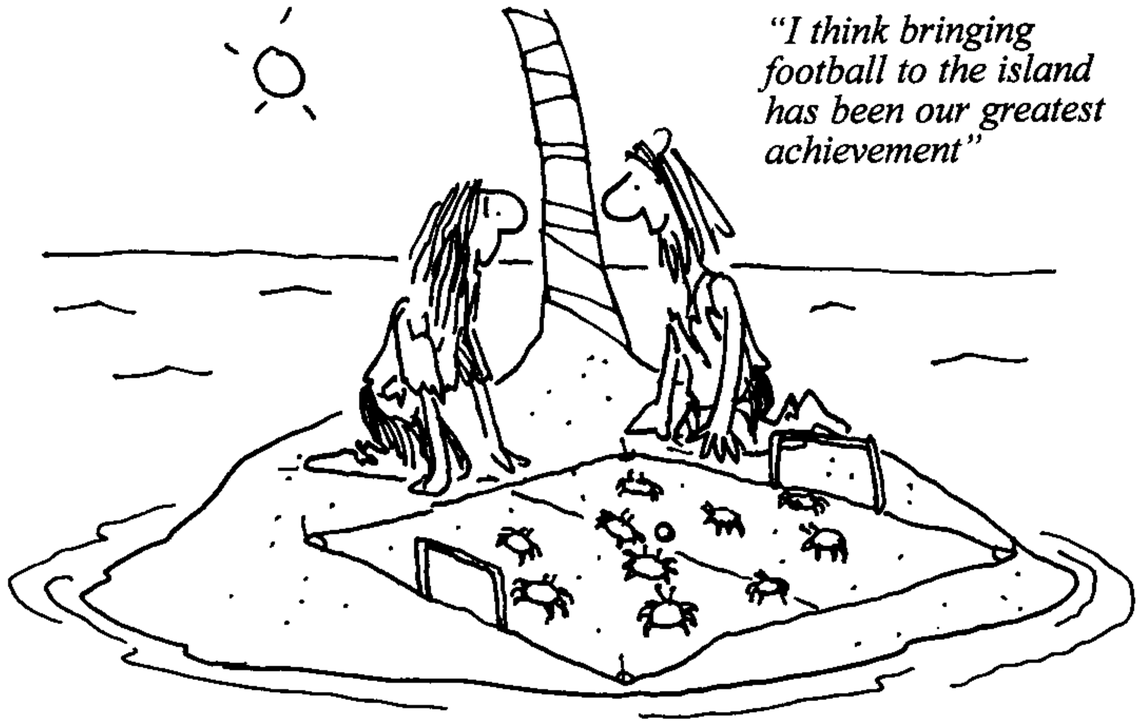
University Challenged

"It's time we put everyone on a level playing field," he said. "At the moment preference is given to bright children who pass exams."

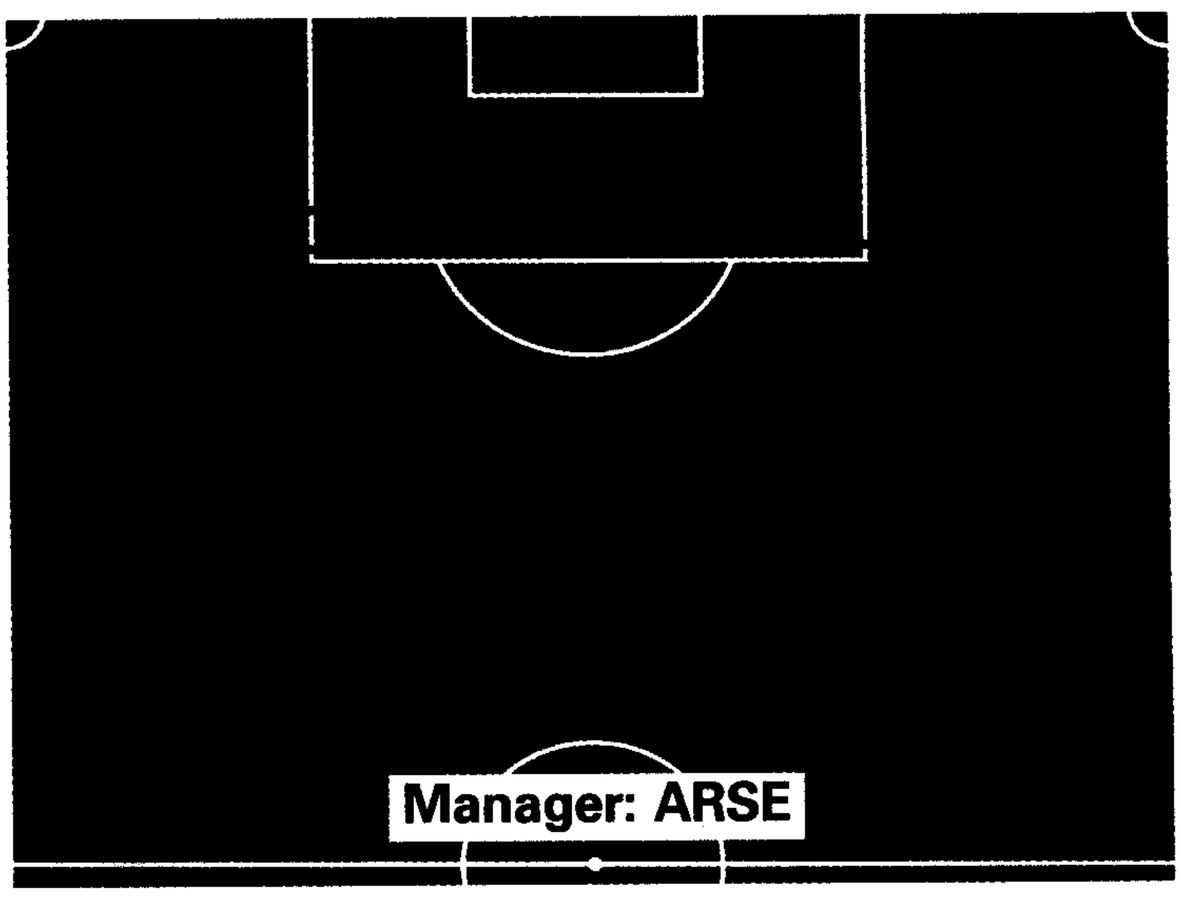
From now on, under Mr Clarke's plan, universities will no longer be allowed to discriminate on the grounds of intelligence or academic ability.

Mr Clarke plans a new regulatory body, Offswot, to ensure that the more able pupils are not over-represented in Britain's tertiary education sector.

"We look forward to the day," he said, "when everyone in the entire country goes to Oxbridge and comes out with a First."



THAT PREMIERSHIP TEAM IN FULL



Wedding of the Century

How They Are Related

MONEY
|
Ben Goldsmith

MONEY
|
The Hon. Kate Rothschild

EXCLUSIVE TO THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Escaped Kidnapped Briton Has Two Attractive Sisters

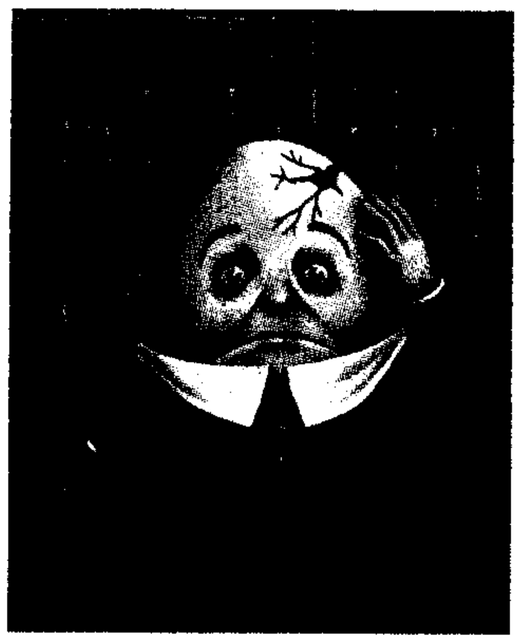
THERE was joy today throughout the Daily Telegraph office after it became clear that the British backpacker who escaped from kidnappers in Colombia has two attractive sisters.

"This is a story of incredible courage, bravery and, more importantly, two very pretty girls," said a beaming Charles Moore.

"This makes this story the most important front page news we've run since all those pictures of attractive seventeen-year-old girls in crop tops receiving their A Level results."

THE NURSERY MAIL

HUMPTY DUMPSTER TO RETIRE



HUMPTY DUMPSTER, the legendary egg-about-town, is to step down from his wall which he has occupied continuously for the last thirty years.

"The familiar figure of Dumpster sitting on the wall seemed an integral part of our lives," said his friend No one, "but recently he has taken to falling off the wall and has ended up in pieces." Said another, "He is a shell of his former self. He is a broken man. There's too much egg on his face."

The Butcher, The Dacre, The Candlestick Maker

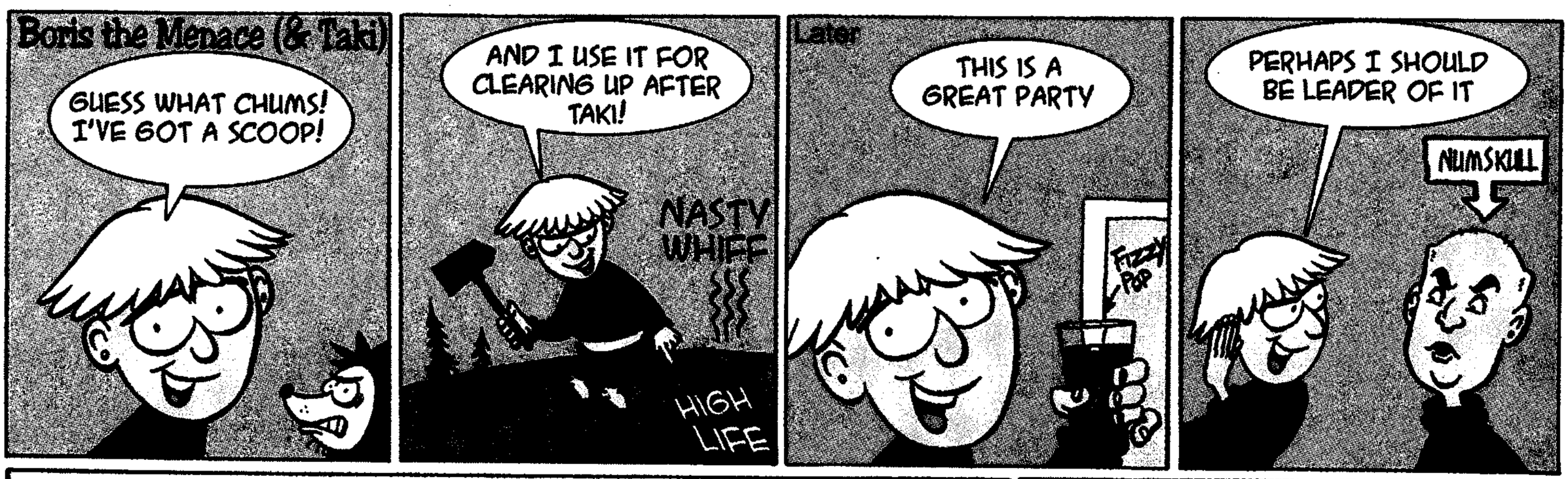
However, Dumpster insisted that he had jumped from the wall rather than be pushed by Paul Dacre.

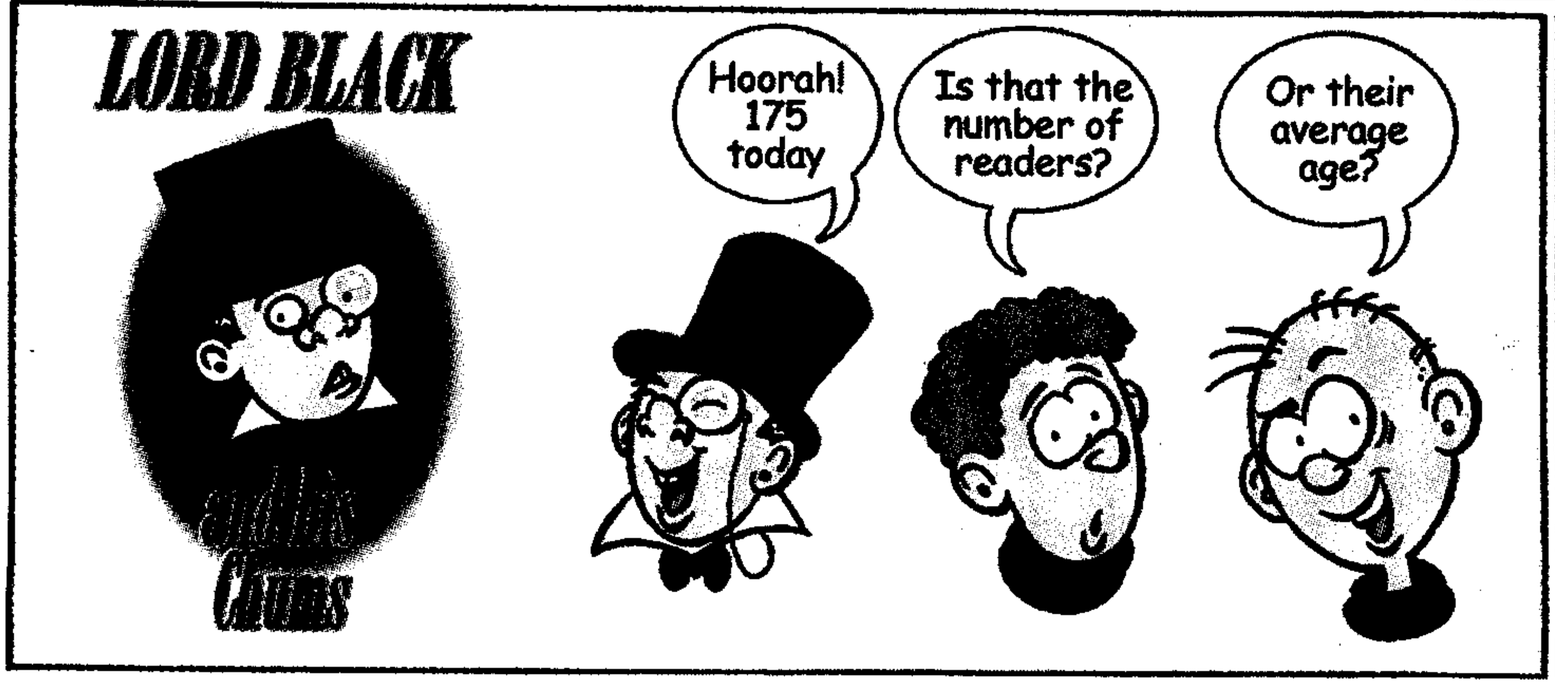
"Anyone who says I didn't choose to go in my own time is talking complete rubbish and should be given my job immediately."

■ Gingerbread House Prices To Fall – New Shock ■ Does Eating Curds And Whey Give You Cancer? ■ Why Asylum-seeking Jumblies Should Be Sent Home In A Sieve

YES, IT'S 175 YEARS OF YOUR FAVOURITE COMIC

THE HAS-BEANO FEATURING BORIS THE MENACE


Boris the Menace (& Taki)
GUESS WHAT CHUMS! I'VE GOT A SCOOP!
AND I USE IT FOR CLEARING UP AFTER TAKI!
NASTY WHIFF
HIGH LIFE
Later
THIS IS A GREAT PARTY
FIZZY POP
PERHAPS I SHOULD BE LEADER OF IT
NUMSKULL



Plus all your other favourite cartoon characters from THE DOUGHTY STREET KIDS!

DIARY

CHRISTOPHER RICKS
Warren Professor of the Humanities at Boston University and formerly King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge on

SIR CLIFF RICHARD'S VISIONS OF SIN

CLIFF: a word at once reassuring yet perilous. A bird – a seagull, a hawk – sits atop the Cliff. Is he ready to fly, or will he fall instead with a flap and a screech to his death?

Sir Cliff (or is it sur cliff, for he is now, more than ever, surely on that cliff) has always had a way with words. He does not simply have his way with them, since a true comprehender of words is no more their master than he or she is their servant. The triangle of Richard's music, his voices, and his unpropitiatory words: this is still his equilateral thinking.

Congratulations and celebrations
When I tell everyone that you're
in love with me.
Congratulations and jubilations
I want the world to know I'm happy
as can be.

Am I alone in detecting an underlying note of sadness, of melancholy, of extreme and nightmarish desolation, in Cliff's signature tune? He states, maintains, avers, that he wants "the world" to know that he is as "happy as can be". But the tone is brutally ironic, as if in morbid acknowledgement, like T.S. Eliot before him, that his is an ambition that is wholly unattainable, for the fast-moving world (whirled?) is too preoccupied with its own thoughts, actions and consequences to concentrate on the state of mind, happy or otherwise, of Sir Cliff Richard.

CONGRATULATIONS – and celebrations. The hard 'c' of congratulations clashes against the sibillant soft 'c' of celebrations (a name also given to a luxury selection of chocolates formed, tellingly, of centres both hard and soft – my own preference, incidentally, is for the soft, particularly the strawberry creme) like a knife through silk. The effect of emotional uneasiness is both maintained and reinforced by his devastating employment of words beginning with 'w' – when, want, world – in the second and fourth lines.

These 'w' words (and the word "word" is, don't forget, itself a word beginning with 'w') carry echoes of the sadness inherent in words like woe, weep and wail: in these lines Richard is evidently semaphoring his own turbulent state of mind, by turns desperate for the acclaim of the entire world population for his struggle towards happiness ("I want the world to know...") yet at the same time poignantly aware that his contentment is only relative ("I'm as happy as can be") to his own, perhaps even greater, capacity for a bitter and brooding unhappiness.

In the third line, "jubilations" , with all its Old Testament echoes of judgement and retribution, rhymes – precisely, uncannily, and with uncanny precision – with the "congratulations" of the title. And there is undeniable sexual tension, too, in Richard's prolonged rendition of the "lay" in jubiLAYtions and "congratuLAYtions" when set against the emphatically standoffish "shun" of jubilaSHUNs and congratulaSHUNs. Seduction versus rejection: it is the greatest artists who take risks, and what could be riskier than for Cliff to bare his deepest sexual misgivings with such purgatory bravado?

THE ENIGMA behind the enigma. Interviewed by Michael Parkinson in September, 1974, Sir Cliff Richard made one of the most revelatory comments of his entire career as a poet: "That's right, Michael, I guess I'd have to say I've had a truly great time making this latest album."

At first glance, the words are deceptively simple. But, as so often with Richard, they carry the inescapable acknowledgement that the inexpressible must defy – or define, or even deify – expression. "Great" can also be spelt "grate". Thus Richard was, once again, sending out a message of heartfelt despair beneath his familiar and terrifyingly transparent guise of cautious geniality.

This note of disillusion with the world comes to a head in his fierce, scabrously cynical (not to say sin-ical) and unyieldingly angry "Mistletoe and Wine" (December 1988).

Christmas time, mistletoe and wine
Children singing christian rhyme
With logs on the fire and gifts on the tree
A time for rejoicing in all that we see.

Some have taken this lyric at surface value (is there ever any value in surface?) arguing that it is in some way a "hymn to the joy of Christmas". But the very word "hymn" is, please note, just one diminutive vowel away from "hymen", which is itself, of course, an aural doppelganger of "Hi, men!"

The rhyming scheme seems at first simple – a-a-b-b – but then you notice Richard's intense frustration in attempting to rhyme "rhyme" with "wine". By employing an unworkable rhyme ("wine") to rhyme with "rhyme" – he successfully undermines the very foundations of verse, and by doing so implies that the traditional fabric of Christmas itself is nothing more than a sentimental illusion, allusion and elusion. Sir Cliff's plan is both wild and cunning: once he has prepared his Biblical den of iniquity ("mistletoe and wine") he will throw logs, gifts and trees on the fire and begin his saturnalian debauchery, inviting other males in to deflower virgins.

RICHARD's indebtedness to William Blake, T.S. Eliot and F. Pontin is further evidenced in the plangent, pungent (and, I, too, am a pun gent) poetry of "Summer Holiday" (1963).

Here, Cliff once again expresses his metaphysical belief in going, like Henry Vaughan, to "where the sun shines brightly" and where, furthermore, "the sea is blue". But his yearning is double-edged, double-crossed, double-decker, double-scotch, double-dutch: for he then adds, bitterly and bittily, "we've seen it in the movies. Now let's see if it's true."

The illusion of the movies can never counterbalance the gruesome – I grew some, too, in my day – reality of the attained holiday. "Doing things we always wanted to... To make our dreams come true". In an extraordinarily beautiful act of artistic compression, Richard rhymes "to" with "true", leaving the darker rhymes – boo, sue, screw, poo – to fester in the reader's mind, like cabbage in a larder. The question is posed, and then unposed: but Sir Cliff has never been angrier.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

GELDOF'S RIGHT. DIVORCE CAN BE A NIGHTMARE FOR DADS LIKE ME.
I REMEMBER WHAT I WENT THROUGH WHEN I WAS FIGHTING FOR CUSTODY OF TROY. MY LAWYERS HARDLY DID A THING TO HELP ME...
TYPICAL!
THROUGHOUT THE PROCEEDINGS THEY WOULDN'T EVEN CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME JOINT ARRANGEMENT...
I HAD TO BRING MY OWN AND SMOKE THEM ON THE FIRE ESCAPE.
TALK ABOUT HUMILIATING...

Literary Review

Filthy Luke

Eleven Minutes
Paulo Coelho
(HarperCollins, £14.99)

IN THE dedication to his latest moneyspinner (surely "account of a spiritual journey"?) Paulo Coelho asserts that "some books make us dream,others bring us face to face with reality, but what matters most to the author is the honesty with which the book is written."

Coelho may well be honest and his books may well make their millions of readers dream (and their author extremely rich), but to imply that any of them, specifically this latest one, brings us "face to face with reality" is, to put it mildly, somewhat extravagant with the facts. In fact it beggars belief.

Described as a "modern fable of sex and love" and apparently based on the true story of a prostitute met by Coelho in Geneva, where the story is set, *Eleven Minutes* is in reality a mildly blasphemous and entirely unconvincing reworking of chapter 7, verses 37-47 of the Gospel according to St Luke. Helpfully, that account of Jesus meeting "the woman who was a sinner" (who anoints His feet with ointment and whose sins, not overlooked by a nearby pharisee, are duly forgiven) is set out at the beginning of Coelho's book.

The story concerns a poor little poor girl named Maria. She grows up in a remote village in the interior of Brazil, where she works for the local shop, watches TV soaps and dreams of being whisked away by a handsome Prince Charming. Then one day, while on holiday in Rio de Janeiro, she is talent-spotted on the beach by a Swiss club owner and offered a contract as a dancer in Europe.

Naturally she assumes this is her big chance, her encounter with destiny, and that fame and fortune will shortly follow. She signs herself up without reading the contract and is soon airlifted to a life of prostitution in Geneva, of all places.

Actually, the location of Maria's descent into sinnerhood is probably quite important, because it allows Coelho to describe the oldest profession in anodyne, almost antiseptic, terms. The girls are all nice, they are well looked after by their manager, they get regular health checks, their clients are all respectable businessmen; and apart from one brief catfight over a cherished client, they are subject to none of the violence and vicissitudes that normally afflict the street level sex worker. No one is doped or duped, robbed or raped, ripped or strangled or dumped in a dark needle-strewn alley in the way that, you feel, most grown up writers would like us to think would happen in the real world.

But this is not the real world. This is a Paulo Coelho novel. It is therefore (a) about an ordinary individual who feels powerless, (b) but who, nevertheless, has the power to choose, (c) even though nothing happens by chance, (d) let alone your hidden destiny, (e) which you can only achieve if you set off on a quest, (f) confronting your demons on the way, and (g) ultimately Find Your Soul.

Thus Maria is not that hoary old literary construct, the tart with a heart. Instead, she's the sinner with a soul. She does not know this at first. She thinks she's a model who's cutting a few moral corners in order to save enough money to fly back to Brazil. She only discovers it when she meets a mysterious man with long hair and a beard who tells her he can see her Inner Light. He's a painter called Ralf Hart (ok, so she's a tart with a Hart after all.) There's no stuff about her anointing his feet but you get the general idea: they exchange gifts by candlelight, which sounds awfully sweet, and eventually practise Sacred Sex, which is not that different from the safe sort she does with her regular clients, only takes rather longer.

With ordinary sex, Maria works out that the actual process usually only takes the 11 minutes of the title. With Sacred Sex, however, "it wasn't eleven minutes, it was an eternity, it was as if we had both left our bodies and were walking joyfully through the gardens of paradise..."

One of the problems Maria has had all her life is that she never seems to get an orgasm when having normal penetrative sex with a man. (She gets them in other ways, masturbating for example, and on one occasion simply contemplating the massive fountain in Lake Geneva.) But with Mr Hart, they just keep coming. "When his hand took me to my fourth orgasm, I entered a place where everything seemed at peace, and with my fifth orgasm I knew God." Afterwards he blesses (and forgives) her and later still they live happily ever after (which seems appropriate for a novel that begins, in all honesty, "once upon a time").

Coelho has excited comment by writing about sex. This is a first for him, apparently. The heroes of his earlier books embarked on their magical mystery morality trips without the need to turn them into sexual odysseys. However banal their philosophical musings, you could safely leave them lying around the house for your husband or servant to see. Here the musings are mingled with masturbation, the morality with sado-masochism (a rather safe cuddly version it has to be said: predictably, the client in question is English) and the usual stuff about age-old wisdom is ditched in favour of a potted history of prostitution and long discussions with the local librarienne about "clitorology."

Coelho is undeniably successful, a media-friendly mage whose spiritual odysseys have been compared to such inspiring texts as Jonathan Livingstone Seagull, that "Desiderata" poster and, on a BBC website, to the *Pilgrim's Progress* of someone called "Bunion". (All that walking, presumably.) But Coelho's books fail, dismally, as novels because everything is generic. Everything is symbolic. You never really care about Maria because she's a cardboard construct whose spiritual journey is about as convincing as that orgasmic walk through the paradise gardens.

Curiously enough, 11 minutes also turns out to be the average time per day spent reading a novel in this country, according to a recent Orange Prize survey. No doubt Sacred Reading takes longer.

Books & Bookmen

■ REALITY has finally caught up with the rumours and Anthony Cheetham has been sacked (over breakfast again) as chief executive of Orion by the company's French parent, Hachette.

This has been on the cards since the disastrous Christmas of 1998, scarcely six months after the French bought 70 percent of Orion, when distribution subsidiary Littlehampton Book Services went into meltdown and cost the new owners £3m. It seemed Cheetham's fate was compounded by the commercially-questionable acquisition of Cassell at an inflated price and the expensive restructuring of the combined operations that followed. But no. Though the downs have continued to be as plentiful as the ups since then, with the Orion Publishing Group Ltd posting a £10m loss in 2001, Cheetham sailed through it all.

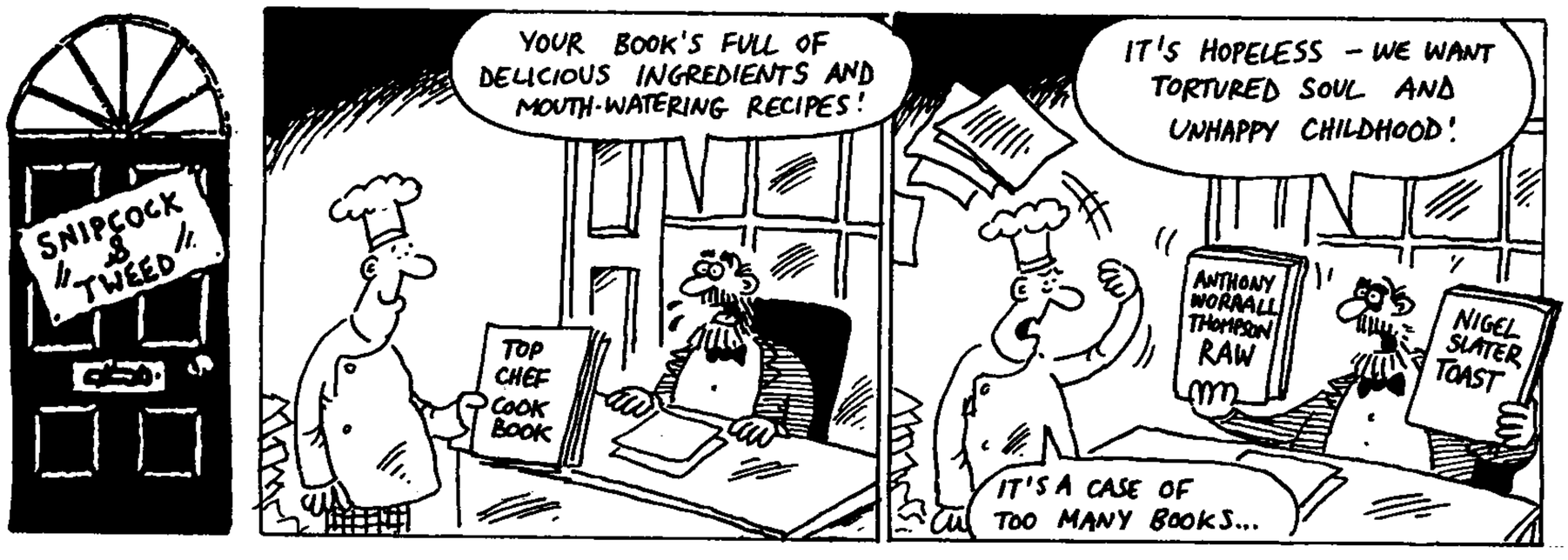
The publishing world is split over "Fatty". Is he Julius Caesar, stabbed in the back by his ungrateful colleagues after years of inspirational leadership? Or is he a bullying monster whom everyone was desperate to be rid of?

On the positive side Cheetham certainly knows how to start a company. After leaving Macdonald he founded Century, which became the basis for Random House UK. When, in 1991, he was sacked by Alberto Vitale over breakfast, he walked away and did it again, taking over Weidenfeld & Nicolson and forming Orion around it.

The company he created has been a publishing powerhouse, with the likes of Ian Rankin, Michael Palin and Trinny and Susannah all raking in the dough. However, while Cheetham undoubtedly knows how to publish books and how to start companies, the chief executive's job, under French corporate ownership, has become less hands on and more about the "vision thing". In this, as shown by the Cassell takeover and the numerous subsequent restructurings of the group, his touch is a lot less sure.

Fatty's final goal — to see Orion over the £100m mark saleswise – was in sight. Unfortunately for him he lost his main ally at Hachette when Jean-Paul Lisimachio left in May after "persistent strategic disagreements", and Lisimachio's replacement, Arnaud Nourry, summoned Cheetham to an ominous breakfast once again. Put simply, the French had finally begun to regard him more as a liability than an asset.

Cheetham's senior management team, many of who, like paperback boss Susan Lamb, finance director Peter Roche and


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
YOUR BOOK'S FULL OF DELICIOUS INGREDIENTS AND MOUTH-WATERING RECIPES!
TOP CHEF COOK BOOK
IT'S HOPELESS - WE WANT TORTURED SOUL AND UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD!
ANTHONY WORRALL THOMPSON RAW
NIGEL SLATER TOAST
IT'S A CASE OF TOO MANY BOOKS...

sales director Dallas Manderson, had followed him from Random Century, was thought capable of seeing the group over the ton without its figurehead.

Now Roche is chief executive (looking after the numbers, while publisher Malcolm Edwards becomes deputy CEO to handle the other kind of books). This will gall Cheetham no end given the antipathy that is understood to have grown between them in recent years. Did Roche, Lamb et al go bleating to Nourry about Cheetham's shortcomings? But if Hachette *had* been confident in him, surely it would have sacked the traitors and backed Cheetham instead? Meanwhile Fatty, now lean and mean, is licking his wounds and promising a comeback. Can he do it yet again? Watch this space.

■ IS THE post really taking 300 years to cross the Atlantic these days... or are American religious publishers incapable of recognising the name and work of one of the most significant Christian poets in history?

A letter was received at HM Prison Bedford last month, addressed to one John Bunyan. The author of *Pilgrim's Progress* was a prisoner in Bedford jail from 1660-1672.

The letter was from the American Anabaptist publishers Rod and Staff, accepting one of his poems – *The Shepherd Boy sings in the Valley of Humilation* – for publication in *Christian School Builder* magazine. Just a few minor copy editing alterations are suggested, including recommending the snappier title *The Shepherd Boy's Song*. The request for the poet to let them know whether the changes and additions are acceptable is likely to go unanswered.

'Bookworm'

Future schlock

Millennium People
J.G. Ballard
(Flamingo, £16.99)

ALL this, a quick glance at the reference books confirms, has been going on for *a very long time*. Forty-one years, in fact, have elapsed since the youthful J.G. made his bow in the literary supplements with *The Drowned World*.

The critics have always loved him, pretty much ("Britain's number one living novelist" – John Sutherland; "quite unlike anyone else" – Martin Amis), endlessly seduced by those cool visions of blank dystopias, the steel-eyed techno-prophecy reaching out to embrace the nightmare of suburb, high-rise and motorway, the sex and violence, the violence and the sex.

Four decades and a bit along the road, our man – an impish 73 now – and his creative juggernaut show no signs of slowing down. *Millennium People* offers yet another footnote to an already much-reprised oeuvre. Starting with an almighty explosion at one of the Heathrow baggage carousels – trademark Ballard territory, this – which kills the chief protagonist's ex-wife, it sketches out what, experience assures us, is an intensely Ballardian subject: the – get this – middle-class metropolitan uprising. David Markham, psychologist and cop stooge, is bidden to investigate.

"Chelsea Marina", down along the Thames near Fulham, is outwardly the most placid of bourgeois retreats. And yet, egged on by a charismatic paediatrician named Dr Richard Gould, a hippy priest and an ex-film studies lectrice (sacked for encouraging her students to shoot their own porn, natch) its inhabitants are in bloody revolt, burning their cars, taking to the streets and going on to plot such incendiary larks as an assault on the National Film Theatre and attacks on the King's Road Pret-à-Manger, a branch of Waterstones's and a Conran restaurant scheduled for the British Museum... And their motivation? Well, the middle classes are "the new poor", don't you know, slapped and pushed around by big business and the establishment. No one with under £300,000 a year really counts, culture and education are there to render us docile, and the average professional school fee payer is simply a coolie in a suit.

"Sad? Not at all. I mean, anything that encourages them to read..."

No doubt about it, "Twickenham is the Maginot Line of the English class system" is one of the great Ballard riffs in a career attended by eye-catching attempts to outrage. At the same time *Millennium People* altogether fails to live up to the promise of its slogans. Like many a dystopia, it lacks any kind of context, any kind of situational grounding, any sort of compost beneath the cascading tendrils of the plot. Characterisation is a matter of names and descriptions, while every member of the cast speaks the same functional dialogue.

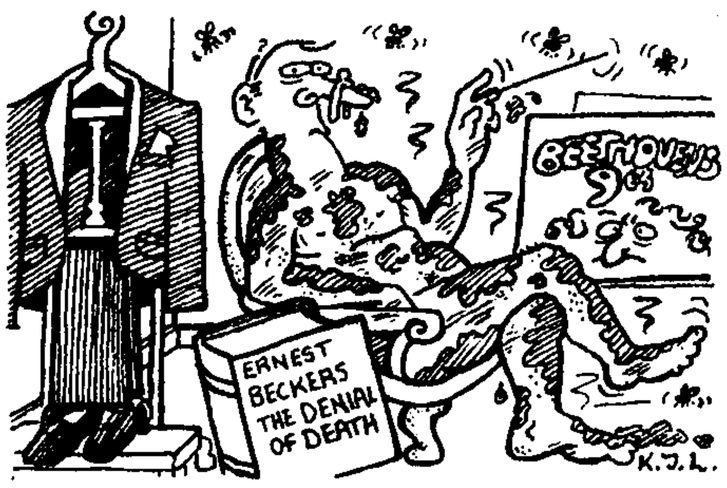
Huge amounts of referring back, too, to those elemental Ballard obsessions, which means there are crashed cars all over the place, along with the usual beady-eyed interest in disability (Markham's second missus is semi-paraplegic and "teased me that I secretly enjoyed the perverse thrill of having a handicapped wife"), and the customarily eager prophecies preached over encroaching suburbia. "Look closely" Dr Gould advises, as they check out a sprawl of rabbit hutch starter homes, "and you can see the future moving towards you."

Ballard has always loved those grim frissons levied by the association of beauty and violence. This time around Markham can be found eyeing up a display of flowers, each "a burst of colour that reminded me of another explosion". But his prose used not to seem so ordinary, so obviously set down in about 20 minutes. At one point in his serial adventures Markham fetches up in Gould's abandoned hospital. The walls are decorated with children's drawings – "touching and hopeful" he decides, and doubtless inspired by some "patient and kindly" teacher. Outside the architecture is "ancient yet imposing". Yet Markham feels "curiously uninvolved". Rather like the reader, in fact.

The novel ends with the lid screwed back down, the licence over and our hero reflecting wistfully on the loss of an environment of "real promise", a veritable "new republic" snuffed out at birth. I ended it thinking that, despite much evidence to the contrary, Ballard's many admirers have yet to notice their man's defining characteristic: that he is, at bottom, despite all this funky futurism and pervy sex, a *comic* writer. Come to think of it, Ballard may not have noticed either.

Among the talking heads is Dr Raj Persaud, who suggests that the song's themes could help replace the spiritual gap in people's lives as organised religion decreases.

***Independent* 'Pick of the Day' preview of BBC2 Arena programme on John Lennon's 'Imagine'**



Ernest Becker's The Denial of Death is a book that he finds himself constantly drawn back to. He first read it at art school and has read it at least 30 times since. "This book had a profound effect on me. When I finished it I took all my clothes off, covered myself in my own faeces and sat in a room for three days listening to Beethoven's 9th." He is saying we all live through screens. Our character and culture is a distance man puts between himself and his faeces.

TICKY HEDLEY-DENT interviews 'artist, writer and self-confessed dandy' SEBASTIAN HORSLEY, *FT Magazine*

Pseuds Corner

While [Tracey] Emin appears hamstrung by her own Post-Modern self-consciousness – confined to endlessly referencing herself – [David] Blaine reminds his audience of less tangible concerns. Indeed, his metaphysical appeal relies on our deep-rooted desire to believe in something more expansive than the man himself.

DAVID THOMPSON
The Times

Adrienne Lowy of Liverpool School of Art and Design says that coffee bars 'provided both male and female sites for dress, dance, display, discussion and democratisation. Teenagers of both sexes could claim, and, to some degree, control the coffee bar as their own non-gendered space, as opposed to the adult- and often masculine-controlled public house, youth club or dance hall.'

***Guardian* article on skiffle and the legacy of Lonnie Donegan**

A touch of calculated self-parody was once one of Martin Amis's stauncher allies. 'Keith finished his fourth Bramley Apple Pie and said, "Shut it"': this is genius.

CHRISTOPHER TAYLER
London Review of Books

The new economic regionalism will not be effective without a serious attack on the centre-periphery structure of British politics. Such a change requires more than a simple devolution of power, but a radically new way of imagining the spaciality of the nation; no longer the norm of a centred nation with tributary obligations, but the promise of a multinodal nation.

From the Catalyst think-tank's *Decentering the Nation: a radical approach to regional inequality*

There are certain advantages to being my children: they travel and get a sophisticated geopolitical sense of the world.

STING interviewed on Breakfast TV

Pseuds Corporate

...the videogame industry has progressed over the last ten years. Today, reviews are less about how a game runs, and more preoccupied with how a game plays. Technical statistics aren't as important to the gamers as they once were. This sort of development isn't unique to the videogame industry. In fact, there's an interesting parallel with the visual arts in 15th century Italy.

From the computer and videogames magazine *Edge*

CONTRIBUTORS: Strobes, Antonio J. Nunez, APR, Hugh Levinson, Edward Lyons, Henry Miller, Bill Pinnell, Alex Scoppie.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

POLICE 5

STALKING POINT

A SOUTH London woman is set to sue the Metropolitan police for failing to act over her repeated complaints about a stalker until *after* the man – who had a history of assaulting women – had attacked her with a hammer.

Even then officers took more than two hours to respond to several 999 calls, by which time the assailant, Daniel Montori, had fled – chased by neighbours who had gone to Valerie Hannon's aid.

The 42-year-old mother of three suffered head, neck and hand injuries in the attack outside her West Norwood home in December 2000. Last month Montori, 51, who had been terrorising her and her family for 10 months, was jailed for eight years for harassment and causing grievous bodily harm. The jury was unable to decide on a charge of attempted murder, which remains on the file.

The Italian-born odd-job man became obsessed with Mrs Hannon after meeting her while working for a housing company. She repeatedly asked the Met to stop Montori, who followed her and left threatening and obscene notes on her car and messages on her answerphone. He once tried to strangle her at her office and had even appeared at her nine-year-old son's school.

Despite the public outcry over stalking in the late 1990s and the promises then made by police and politicians, Mrs Hannon believes she was not taken seriously. Once, when her mobile phone was full of threatening messages, she says she was simply told to change the number and "it will all blow over". At the time of the stalking – and unknown to Mrs Hannon – Montori was on bail for an alleged racially-aggravated assault.

Despite this Montori was able to build a lair near Mrs Hannon's house, from where he launched his potentially fatal hammer attack. Inside the lair was a bayonet. Police were finally forced to put the Hannon family under 24-hour guard for several days over Christmas 2000 until Montori was tracked down in Dover. Even then the family claim it was only at their instigation a short time later that sniffer dogs were used to search nearby flats and gardens where a second hide-out was found.

To add insult to injury, during his Old Bailey trial Montori was allowed to cross-examine Mrs Hannon after he had sacked three solicitors and two sets of barristers.

Mrs Hannon told the *Eye* that one officer sent to investigate her complaints had said it had all been a "monumental fuck-up"; but so far she has only received a letter from Scotland Yard which she considers barely an apology and which expresses the hope that any future dealings with the Met "will be more satisfactory".

Last week Scotland Yard said it had recognised shortcomings in the affair and had offered an immediate apology. It has now also offered Mrs Hannon regular contact and support.

DEEPCUT DITHER

WHAT are Surrey police up to over the mysterious deaths of four young soldiers at Deepcut barracks at Aldershot?

In the week ending Friday 19 September, they told the bereaved families that they would be making a statement on that date about their enormously long investigations into the deaths. They saw the families one by one in the days leading up to the 19th – and disappointed them with the news that they would not be pressing for a public inquiry into the Deepcut deaths (or other deaths at army camps) as is now demanded by 202 MPs of all parties.

Nor would there be any prosecutions. Instead, said the police, they would be giving the results of their inquiries to the Surrey coroner, Michael Burgess, who has already decided (see last *Eye*) that one of the young men killed himself. Thus the information that the families really wanted will be kept confidential until it gets to the coroner.

At 2pm on 19th, the police saw Geoff and Diane Gray, whose 17-year-old son was found dead at Deepcut two years ago. The officers told the Grays that the police investigations included two forensic reports on the autopsies of the dead bodies, one in Britain and one in Germany. Incredibly, the police would not disclose the results of their two forensic inquiries, except to admit rather grudgingly that they did not conclude that the young people had committed suicide.

Geoff and Diane Gray

This was rather important, since the families' own forensic expert, Frank Swann, has effectively ruled out suicide in three of the cases, and is almost certain that the fourth did not commit suicide either. Almost immediately after the meeting with the Grays, deputy chief constable Robert Quick of Surrey police held a press conference to announce that there would be no prosecutions. Somehow he managed not to mention the police's own forensic experts' investigations.

It seems pretty obvious to the families that if someone is shot dead and did not shoot themselves, then the death is either an accident or a murder. The likelihood of all four Deepcut deaths being accidental is slender, to say the least, especially as one of the young men, Sean Benton, was shot five times in the chest. The cover-up continues.

WORKING IN SAUDI

Utter bilge

FOUR British divers have suffered severe chemical poisoning while working for a major Saudi Arabian company in the Persian Gulf. While their health and job prospects are in ruins, their employers have tried to cover up the incident and the British authorities are turning a blind eye.

On 7 May Stephen Harley, Andrew Iles, Mick Hopley and Stephen Lakeman were working for Algosaibi Diving and Marine on contract to the Saudi national oil company, Aramco. They were refitting floating hoses at a single buoy mooring (SBM) in the Gulf off Jubayl. Such offshore moorings enable tankers to pump their cargo aboard without going into port.

When the hoses need cleaning the correct procedure is to treat them with chemicals and flush them with seawater, which is then discharged into the bilge of the vessel to be disposed of in treatment plants ashore. In this case, unknown to the divers, the undermanned Saudi deck crew of Aramco's dive support vessel, *Rimthan 2*, had cleaned the hoses with chemicals not intended for the purpose, and then discharged the liquid straight into the sea. So when the team of six Algosaibi divers – the Britons plus a Saudi, Ahmed al Ahmadi, and a South African, John Van der Mesht – entered the water they were swimming in a toxic cocktail containing Silk 5 and S-fast, one of the ingredients of which is methylchloride, a carcinogen. Because the water was warm and they were working at the surface, they were not wearing full diving suits, just overalls and wetsuit tops. Andy Iles told the *Eye* what happened next:

"I was in the water with my dive partner, Steve Harley. After 15 minutes I felt like I'd swallowed a tennis ball; I was struggling for breath. I just thought it was indigestion. Steve said I should get out of the water but we are supposed to be tough guys; I didn't want people to think I was soft. I stayed in the water about 70 minutes in all. I reported to the supervisor, who sent me to the ship's medic, but he was busy and couldn't see me. By now the others were all reporting breathing problems too."

When the divers did see the ship's doctor they were given oxygen and Ventolin spray and told to rest. It was not until other divers had finished the SBM work the following day that Aramco and Algosaibi management allowed the ship to head for port so they could seek further medical help. In the next few days Iles suffered stomach cramps and dizziness and passed blood. The others suffered a similar range of symptoms.

Four months later Iles still suffers from severe headaches, a tight chest, coughing spasms, memory loss, mood swings and depression. The others are all still suffering respiratory problems; Hopley has developed a kind of allergy to sunlight: going outdoors causes a painful rash.

Immediately after of the incident the divers realised Algosaibi's priority was to get the oil – and the dollars – flowing again. The health of a team of divers on £85 a day came a poor second. By the time they reached hospital – some 30 hours after exposure to the chemicals – it was too late to administer any antidote. The only thing doctors could do was attempt to relieve the symptoms.

On Sunday 11 May, the divers were visited in hospital by a Saudi government official who produced a letter, written in Arabic, for the divers to sign. As, according to their Saudi colleague Ahmed al Ahmadi, it absolved Algosaibi from any responsibility for the incident, the Britons refused. They were also shown an item in a local Saudi newspaper which reported that the divers were in hospital because they had Sars.

The next day they were visited by Algosaibi's operations manager, Bill Stonebanks, a Briton. He produced another letter for the divers to sign, this time in English. Again the divers refused, and demanded a full inquiry into what had happened. "OK, now it's time for hardball," said Stonebanks.

The meaning of this became apparent the following week when the divers approached the Saudi coastguard to ask why no officer had appeared to take statements. They were told the incident was not being investigated because Algosaibi had given the coastguard a letter, stating that the divers did not want the matter to be pursued. On Monday 19 May the divers were finally interviewed by a coastguard captain who, according to the six, "showed more interest and compassion than Algosaibi had in the last 12 days".

Nothing, however, has so far come of the "investigation", and nothing is likely to. The Algosaibis are one of Saudi Arabia's wealthiest "merchant" families. (Saudi Arabia's last-but-one ambassador to Britain, Ghazi Algosaibi, caused a furore when he published a poem in praise of suicide bombers.) British embassy officials in Saudi Arabia said they were "in no position to negotiate" with the company, saying the accident was a matter between the divers and their employer and they could provide no legal representation.

Back in Britain the divers have received no compensation and no apology from Algosaibi, although to date they have continued to be paid. The company has also promised to pay for any specialist medical treatment. At least two have already decided they can no longer work as divers because of their health.

Two weeks ago the *Eye* emailed and wrote to Algosaibi's Bill Stonebanks with a detailed list of questions about the *Rimthan 2* incident, but at the time of going to press we had received no reply.

DANTE'S INFERNAL CHEEK

IN the recent Channel 4 documentary about Diana Dors' "missing millions", her erstwhile paramour Troy Dante admitted disarmingly: "None of the men in her life were any good for her, including myself." Punters seduced by the blandishments of 147 Racing Ltd may well hold Dante (né Noel Fredericason) in similarly low esteem. The financial services authority (FSA) has now obtained an interim injunction banning the company from carrying on a racehorse tipping and bet placement service.

With a 40 percent stake, Dante is the only British shareholder. The other 60 percent is held by Merkarba Ltd, which is registered far from British racing's habitual haunts in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The drill was for Top Bet Placement Services to place bets on horses selected by 147, but it seems punters were not informed when or on which horses bets had been placed. The FSA believes that about 500 customers, each paying £97 a month, with a minimum betting stake of £500, signed up. They were promised that there was no risk involved, and that if they did not win at least 10 times their stake they would be repaid 12 months' fees.

However, some punters became restive. "I have just received the latest monthly statement from Top Bet Placement Services and as usual the results are abysmal," one wrote to Dante on 22 August. "While I have your guarantee that my total subscription for the year (£1,164) will be refunded if the projected profits are not made – a prospect which seems increasingly unlikely as each losing month passes – I am deeply concerned that enough funds may not be available to fulfil your guarantee to all members of the club. I would appreciate some reassurance from yourselves that my fears are groundless." Neither this nor two previous letters to Dante elicited any reply.

The FSA is keen to hear from other 147 Racing customers. "Our investigation is in its early stages," a spokeswoman says. "If we can recover assets these will be returned to customers."

In happier days, Dante led a pop group called The Infernos. He once attended a party at Diana Dors' house, and stayed for five years. P.J. Proby, the singer whose public performances were enhanced nightly by the eagerly awaited highlight of splitting his trousers, recalled Dors fondly and Dante slightly less fondly. "Old Troy," he mused. "Funny guy, great guy, but he was an incredible gambler. He didn't have any money. It was Diana's money all the time." Proby recalled an incident in which she complained that £25,000 of hers had disappeared in this way.

"I gambled," Dante admitted. "But the story of her picking up the debts wasn't quite true." However, he acknowledged he had lost some of her money in Las Vegas. When they split up, he walked (or perhaps drove) away with the "Roller, the Mini and the dog".

Dante later went into snooker as an associate of Ramsay McLellan, a former manager of Peter Ebdon, and managed a few snooker clients of his own, though no household names. He was also primarily responsible for selecting players to appear on BBC's snooker game show, *The Big Break*.

Two former world snooker champions, Ebdon and John Parrott, both of whom are knowledgeable about horse racing, lent their names to promote 147's scheme. Parrott is an enthusiastic turf fan who appears on racing coverage from time to time; Ebdon owns racehorses, including Poetry in Motion.

Dante and Merkaba acquired their shares in 147 Racing on 1 October 2002 from Gary Woodward, who had previously fallen foul of an Advertising Standards Authority adjudication against a direct mailing he sent out explaining: "How I turned £250 into well over £210,000 in less than two years working no more than ten hours per week." On 9 April 2003 it was the turn of 147 Racing to be on the wrong end of an ASA verdict following a complaint by Surrey Trading Standards, who objected to a mail-shot featuring photographs of Ebdon, Parrott and Mick Easterby, a racehorse trainer, which urged punters to "mail this no-risk offer today!" An accompanying No Risk Guarantee Certificate pledged "to refund your membership fee in total if you haven't earned a tenfold increase on your stake money. This means you can be a member of 147 Racing Ltd confident in the knowledge that you will make money." Since the offer referred only to the promise to refund subscription fees after 12 months, rather than the actual stake, the ASA decided that the "no risk" claim was misleading: customers could in fact lose a significant sum.

Dante's celebrity backers are now understandably keen to distance themselves from the scheme. Parrott, who said he had been only briefly involved, insisted that he had thought he was endorsing a racing club and added: "I feel desperately sorry for anyone who lost money." A spokesman for Ebdon said: "He is no longer involved either."

What a cell out

MOST of the team of observers who monitor holding cells in courts across London have given up their volunteer posts in disgust. They say that in the nine years of their existence almost none of their recommendations has been followed up.

The panel of lay observers come from different areas of expertise and act like a board of prison visitors, inspecting the conditions in which prisoners are held and transported.

Their ninth annual report, however, is in effect an 11-page letter of resignation which notes their anger. The chairwoman has resigned, with no one yet agreeing to take on the role, and the most experienced members of the panel left either before or just after the report was completed.

Recommendations have ranged from suicide prevention to the lack of food for prisoners in cells all day and the fact that prisoners can't wash or dry their hands. The report notes that though contractors have agreed the lack of washing facilities is unacceptable, none has yet been provided.

The report adds: "Open drains and sluices remain in some courts. They are a health hazard and are usually filthy… The response to the panel's findings by the agencies involved is minimal… Professional expertise and careful research are dismissed. The Prison Service has found it very difficult to accept that a lay panel can be well informed."

A 2001 report by the Howard League prison reform charity found 113 incidents of attempted suicide or self-harm in court cells that year, many requiring hospital treatment.

● THE Howard League prison reform charity has spent £4,000 on clothing for girls and young women this year because the Prison Service fails to provide even basic necessities for female prisoners.

The charity had a £2,500 fund for emergency clothing for women in prison but has already spent almost £4,000 on basics like underwear and pyjamas and is having to dip into other funds to meet demand.

Those in need of clothing included a 16-year-old girl who had lived in 14 different children's homes and who was three months pregnant when she was sent to prison with no money to buy clothes. "She was literally busting out all over," said the Howard League's Frances Crook. Without donations – including larger underwear and sensible shoes – from the charity, the girl would have had nothing to wear.

Cash and grab

THE strange story of Franco and Fatima Bellacosa will help anyone who believes that Barclays Bank is as devoted to its long-standing customers as its expensive advertisements pretend.

The Bellacosas have been living in London, and banking at Barclays, for more than 20 years, scraping together a living as cleaners. For many years they put some of their small income into a joint savings account at Barclays' Willesden branch.

On 30 March this year, Mr Bellacosa went to the bank and asked for a "bank cheque" for the £12,000 that had accrued in their joint savings account. He explained that he wanted to put the money in a building society as a deposit for a home for his son. At no time was he advised that he could simply transfer the money into his current account and draw a cheque on it. He was told to come back with identification. He assumed that when he did so, he would get a cheque for the £12,000.

He returned on 3 May with the necessary documents. When he produced them, he was amazed to see the clerk counting out £12,000 in £10 and £20 notes. He asked if he could at least have the money in £50 notes, but was told this was out of the question. So he left the bank carrying a large envelope full of cash.

Mr Bellacosa, who has a slight limp, was dressed in ordinary clothes as he walked home down a one-way residential road. Suddenly a blue car pulled up alongside him, a man jumped out and hurled him to the ground shouting "give me this". The man seized the package and jumped into the car, which sped off. Two women in the street saw the incident and were able to call the police and comfort the injured cleaner, but they did not get the number of the car.

Distraught at the loss of their life's savings, the Bellacosas complained to the bank, whose manager Mrs Tracy Morgan, replied that the bank had done nothing wrong. In June, an old friend of the Bellacosas, Margaret de Rohan, wrote to Sir Peter Middleton, chairman of the bank: "No one with any degree of professional integrity or concern for the well-being of a fellow human being would send someone out of that bank with £12,000 in cash," she wrote. Sir Peter, who only gets £528,000 a year, was obviously too busy to reply himself, so the matter was passed to Jeremy Bigmore, Barclays' senior customer relations manager, who took three letters to explain that the bank cannot accept liability for the event and cannot afford a penny to compensate the Bellacosas.

CHIMNEY POTTY

OH DEAR. No sooner does the Environment Agency give Rugby Cement the go-ahead to start controversial tyre-burning trials at its town centre site than the plant has to be shut down for spewing nasty black dust over long-suffering locals.

In fact in the month since the EA defied opposition from the local authority, the local MP and even Rugby's primary health care trust, the plant has been forced to close at least three times, leading campaigners to claim it is unstable.

For the RMC group which now operates the plant – the biggest in country – the spillage couldn't come at a worse time. The black dust descending on the surrounding residential area shows that the cement works' chimney isn't up to the job of carrying waste and potentially toxic pollution safely away.

Health chiefs and others are now considering a judicial review of the decision to authorise tyre-burning trials. Tyres are said to give off even more toxic and carcinogenic pollutants, such as heavy metals and dioxins, than fossil fuels.

The health care trust isn't convinced the EA properly considered the kiln's proximity to the town centre and is unhappy about monitoring. Still, at least the EA is concerned for some people's wellbeing. Protesters turning up to a meeting to discuss the plant were banned from bringing laptops or other heavy items into the meeting "to ensure the health and safety of agency officers".

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

LABOUR delegates at this week's annual conference will be reassured to learn that companies linked to two Labour donors continue to feature in an expanding investigation by the Serious Farce Office into ripping off the National Health Service.

The investigation concerns suspected overcharging and price-fixing in the supply of supposedly cheaper generic drugs, particularly penicillin-based antibiotics and the blood-thinning agent Warfarin. The suggested rip-off is up to £400m.

Recently the SFO investigation has been expanded to include two companies in Ireland who were approached to join the price-fixing scheme. Six British companies and their directors' homes were raided by the SFO in April last year as part of what was codenamed "Operation Holbein".

The British companies include the UK subsidiary of the American-based Ivax Corporation. The British company was built up and sold to Ivax by Labour donor Isaac Kaye. Another target is Generics, now part of the German giant Merck, which was created by Kaye's fellow South African and Labour donor, Tony Tabatznik.

Among the other targets are the listed Goldshield Group, plus Regent-GM, owned by Iraqi millionaire Nadhmi Auchi, who also has Labour friends such as former minister Keith Vaz. Auchi's office features a picture of the Houses of Parliament presented to him by science minister Lord Sainsbury "on behalf of Tony Blair" and signed by 130 MPs of all parties.

Sources close to the SFO investigation believe they now have evidence that the drug companies conspired to defraud the NHS by overstating their costs in order to maximise profits and their supply contracts. This involved the provision of false information and thereby a deception.

This evidence has emerged from the documents seized in the raids which included some exceedingly telling paperwork found underneath the bed of one of the directors whose home was raided. Obviously, the proper place for company documents to be filed.

Forensic examination of the up to three million paper and electronic documents seized in the raids has also produced evidence of meetings at which price-fixing appears to have been on the agenda.

This, plus the evidence of a key insider who has approached the SFO, leads investigators to believe that the SFO will be in a position to start making arrests early next year, although any charges may need to wait until much later in 2004. As for a trial, that could still be two years away. The investigation is so expensive that it has been granted separate funding by the treasury outside the normal budget for SFO cases.

The SFO is now able to bring charges under the new enterprise act designed to give the competition commission greater powers to deal with price-fixing cartels. The SFO is expected to prosecute most competition commission cases. This new law is likely to help in any criminal prosecution. But it is still far from clear, despite that legislation and all the time and money, that Operation Holbein will result in a prosecution. There is not just the problem of proving which directors were responsible for the companies' actions and of making a case comprehensible to a jury. Or of proving that the actions of the companies, however reprehensible, went beyond simple capitalism by charging what the market would bear.

There is also the possibility that the companies could escape any prosecution by settling a civil case started by the NHS against three of the companies since the SFO raids over the supply of Warfarin. Further civil actions are also promised by the NHS. If the drug companies settled with the NHS and paid large compensation, it could be

"The late media mogul Robert Murdoch hid dosh in Liechtenstein"

Veckans Affärer (Sweden), 8 September 2003

difficult for the SFO to convince a jury or even a judge that they had not purged their guilt. And if the SFO did not drop the prosecution, why should the companies settle the civil case?

The SFO had expected the NHS to wait on the outcome of a criminal case before bringing any civil action. But it appears that the NHS counter-fraud unit, which initiated the criminal case, was concerned about the statute of limitations for any civil claim.

Buying themselves out of a similar criminal problem is certainly the policy adopted in the US by drug companies when faced by similar criminal investigations for over-charging; and if one company settles, so do the others. A lesson probably not lost already on Ivax and Merck. The question for all six companies targeted by the SFO may be whether to hang together or to hang separately. Hanging together could be difficult if one company cuts a deal in return for immunity and cooperation. So far this has not happened, but in America this year alone three major criminal cases have been settled by drug companies in order to avoid a trial. AstraZeneca paid $355m to settle a case over its sale of a cancer drug. Abbott Laboratories paid $600m to settle fraud charges over products for treating the elderly. Abbott and its Japanese partner Takeda Chemical Industries had previously paid a record $875m in 2001 to settle charges relating to a cancer drug. Earlier this year, GlaxoSmithKline and Bayer paid $344m to settle over-charging on several of their products.

In all these instances, the companies pleaded guilty to criminal charges and paid penalties, as well as making substantial civil compensation payments to settle the prosecution. This policy is seen as highly cost-effective by federal prosecutors as it nets large amounts from the offenders for over-charging the Medicare and Medicaid programmes funded by the US taxpayer while avoiding lengthy trials and appeals. And, for the companies, it means no suits go to jail or even court.

The companies targeted by the SFO are also expected to see the power of that argument, especially once arrests start being made. The question then will be whether, in the face of a large cash civil settlement, the SFO would want to risk a costly trial.

AMERICAN investigators were in London recently obtaining further evidence relating to the prosecution of fugitive hotelier Stanley Tollman – close friend of Chelsea chairman Ken Bates.

Tollman faces tax fraud charges in New York and the Americans are pressing for his extradition from his London home. Whether the Americans wanted to see Bates is not clear. The Chelsea chairman's name was used – Bates insists without his knowledge – in one of the companies, Chelsea Acquisitions, which was involved in the fraud on Tollman's hotel company's creditor banks. What is certain is that the Americans are very keen to speak to potential witness Patrick Murrin, the former Chelsea director who ran companies and trusts and bank accounts out of Guernsey for both Bates and Tollman.

AN INTERESTING document arrives from Standard Chartered's London headquarters. It is an assessment made earlier this year of risks faced by the third world banking specialists.

Headed "Issues Radar – What Could Hurt Us", it highlights potential problems in Zimbabwe, South Africa, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Greece. It also refers to "Jersey Issues" – well known to *Eye* readers. These no doubt mean the Qatar bribes row and the current investigations by the Jersey Financial Services Commission into Standard Chartered's bank and trust companies, following the disclosure of breaches of UN sanctions on Iraq and the dumping of suspect deposits by London in Jersey.

Eye readers with long memories will remember John Daly of Hemdale fame. Daly

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE IS HARD WORK...
LOOK AT THAT BLOKE!
WRRRRRR
WRRRRRR
...WORKING HIS BOLLOCKS OFF! GIVE ME SUCCESS ANY DAY!
152.

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Mark Aspinall's son Damian

Internet casino company Aspinalls Online...

What he floated it for three years ago

£45m

What he wants to buy it back for now

£560,000

made his name in Hollywood as a film producer before it all went wrong. He was last heard of as a failed boxing promoter in Hong Kong. Now he has reappeared as chairman of a US-listed – well, just, as it is only on the "pink sheets" of the NASDAQ market – film company appropriately called Miracle Entertainments. However, Miracle's first film – produced, directed and written by Daly – *The Petersburg-Cannes Express* opened last week in the US to a critical panning. The *New York Times* described it as "a film of outstanding dullness and ineptitude". Clearly, what Miracle's investors will need with John Daly is exactly that.

HAVING been the focus of their interest, Andrew Regan, the failed City wannabe, is rumoured to have discovered the attractions of private investigators.

Regan is said to have ties to a small Midlands firm of PIs called Global Intelligence. The rumour seems to be based on the fact that an investor in Global Intelligence was a Monaco company at a time when Regan was resident there. By another amazing coincidence, Global hired two former Control Risks operatives. It was CR who organised the surveillance that filmed Regan in a Buckinghamshire hotel car park being handed internal documents by corrupt Co-Operative Wholesale Society executive Alan Green, who had been paid £1m to help Regan on an earlier deal.

Regan was acquitted in July amid allegations of jury "nobbling" of a theft charge in relation to that £1m and another £1m paid to another CWS executive both of whom have been jailed. Regan's acquittal was described by the CWS, which is still suing Regan, as a "travesty of justice".

'Slicker'

Warballs

"The launch of a new £2 million brand for Glasgow, intended to replace the 20-year-old Miles Better slogan, has been delayed again. Eddie Friel, chief executive of Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley Tourist Board, insisted the brand was "absolutely ready" and blamed the war in Iraq and SARS for the delay." — Glasgow *Herald*.

"Helen Fielding has come up with a new genre. Olivia Joules, her female spy, is, according to Fielding's publicist, an all-action, ass-kicking, man-chewing heroine. 'Post 9/11, the idea of what a woman is has changed,' he says. 'It's all about self-reliance, individualism and your own decisions.'" — Amanda Craig, *Sunday Times* Style section.

"The return to domesticity has several driving forces. It may have something to do with 11 September…" — Margarette Driscoll, *Sunday Times* Style section.

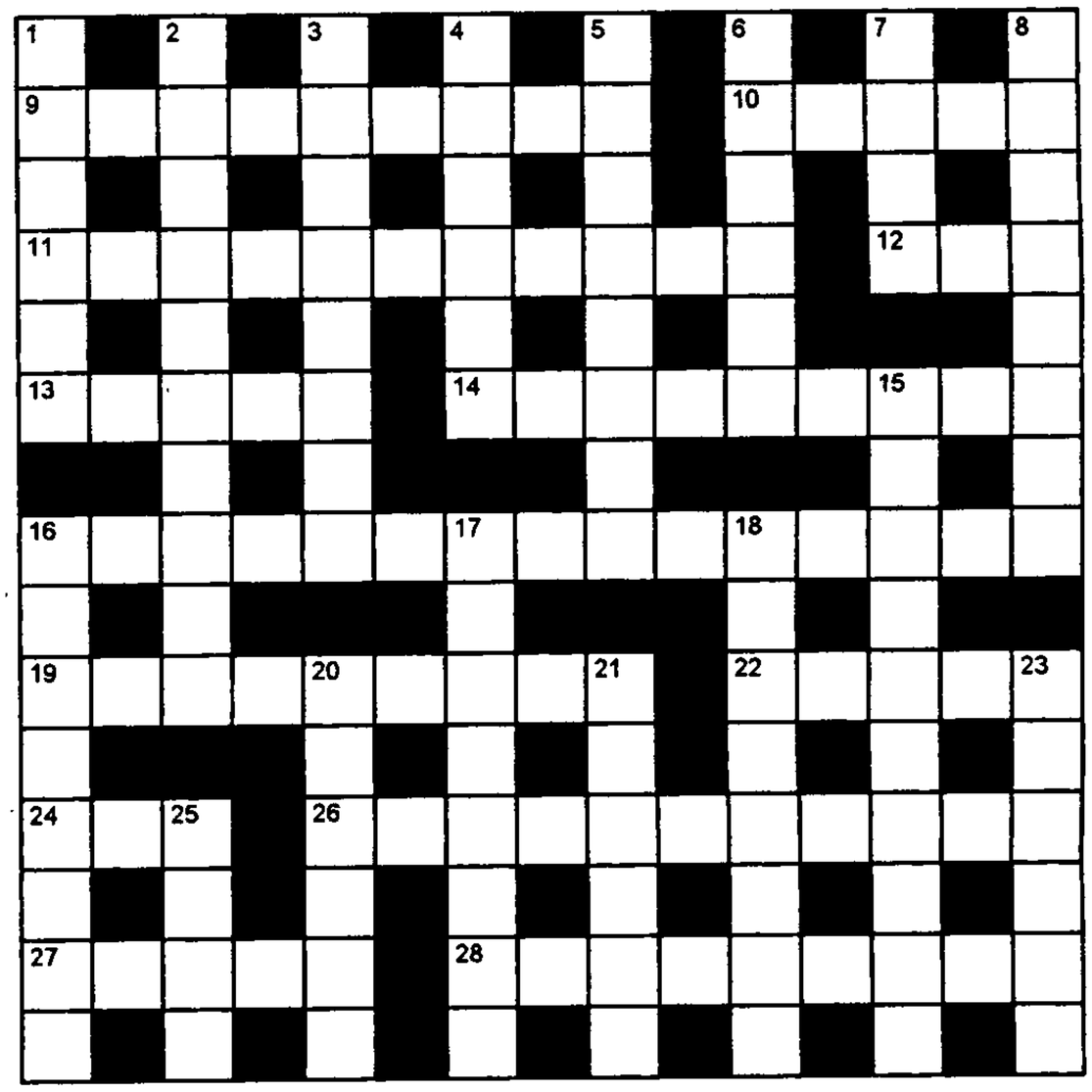
"The difficult and uncertain times that we have experienced since 9/11 are reflected in the autumn/winter collections; but it's good news because whether you are vibrantly young and at the cutting edge of fashion or more mature and wanting to contemporise your wardrobe, the story is that everything is very wearable." — Brochure for the Bath Fashion Festival.

EYE CROSSWORD 245

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 10 October 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

9 At an early stage, Cyclops goes arse over tip – like the poet, needs internal adjustment (9)

10 Balls + speed = sex-appeal (5)

11 Shift going out of fashion – means finding a potential shag quickly? (5,6)

12 Monica reportedly getting end away – avoided by Clinton (3)

13 Votes Conservative, hiding provisional concern (5)

14 Amis loses head in e-plots fiasco – "they produce controversial reading" (9)

16 Standard celeb on beach hiding end of his bollocks (5,3,7)

19 Bristol garrison, a model of reciprocal action (3,3,3)

22 Expression of gay person: 'male circumference not good' (5)

24 Tube users' conception curtailed (3)

26 Randy type's one-piece – oo-er! – captivates servile public schoolboy (1,3,2,1,4)

27 The president gets to shag Blair's no.2 (5)

28 Cuddly Australian bloke involved with AA meets a boozer's end (5,4)

DOWN

1 Stone needs fix to get around being loaded (3-3)

2 About flies Bardot's undone and various 'creative works' (6,4)

3 Medicine makes great organ subside, getting small (8)

4 Spots rising politician make a pitch (6)

5 Red-nose star, bog standard at first, being without a speciality (1,1,6)

6 Trick document is fair means of getting plenty of bangs (6)

7 Leamington's legless, weight-shedding, dead awful leader (4)

8 Habits formed by drug suppliers replacing tranquillizers initially with Ecstasy (8)

15 Campbell's job: providing great copy (10)

16 Be an MP (pissed) and refuse to go! (3,5)

17 Is pettily critical of grooms, in a beastly way (3-5)

18 Queer version of Abba's for afters? (3,5)

20 Pisspoor royal, holding line, gets in the way of head (6)

21 Hard working type has jar – not pissed, though (6)

23 City male holding skirt up (6)

25 Preferred dated number vocalised by Brenda? (4)

Crossword 244 winner: JOHN LANGTON

ACROSS: 1/18D Philip Marlowe 5 Pop songs 9 Sam Spade 10 In time 11 Merry 12 Verandahs 14 Fortress 15 Eagle 17 Poser 18 Maypoles 20 All comers 22 Islam 24 Badass 25 Olive oil 26 Personae 27 Kisser.

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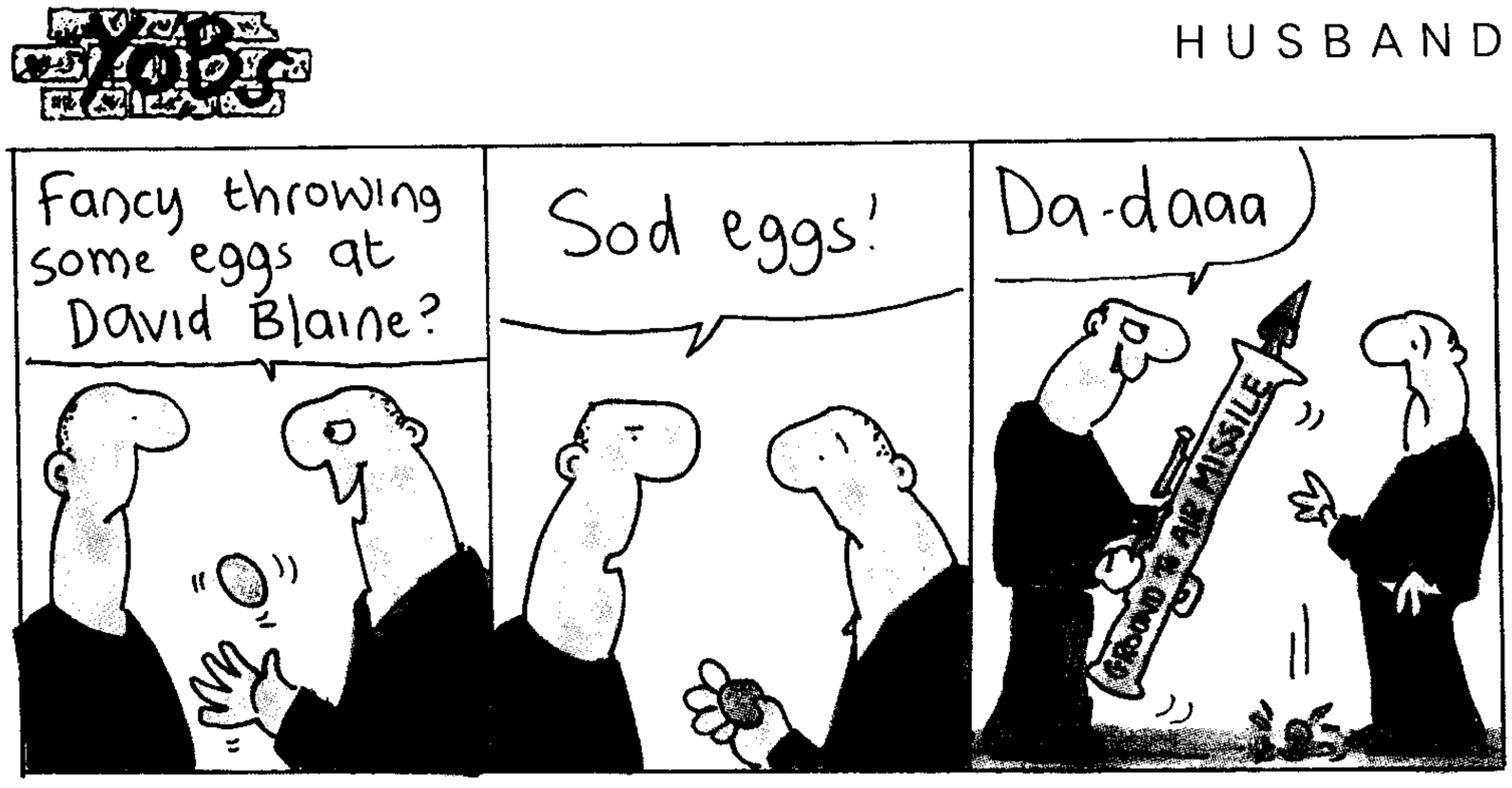

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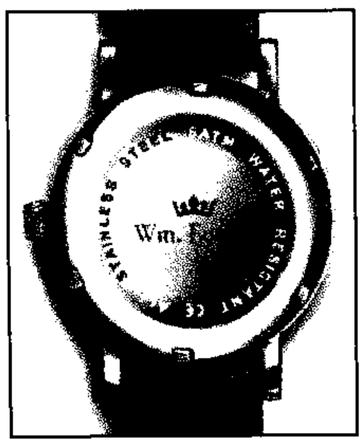

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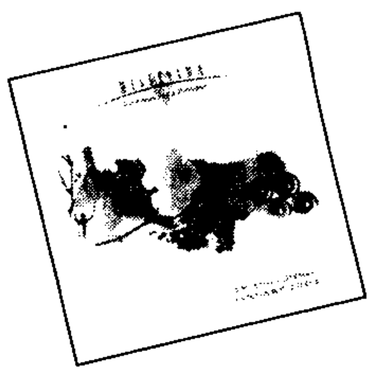

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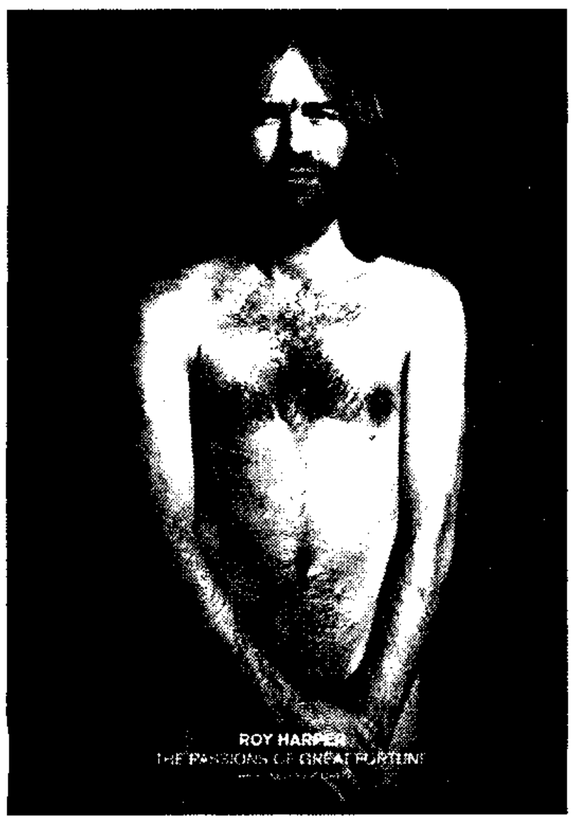

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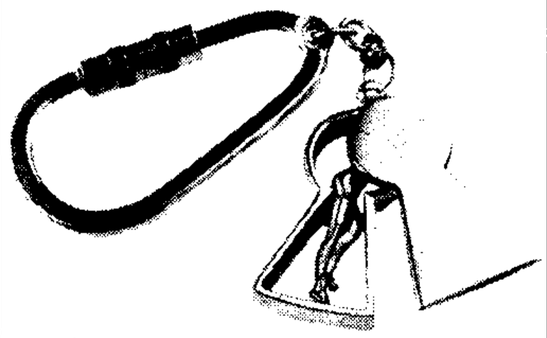

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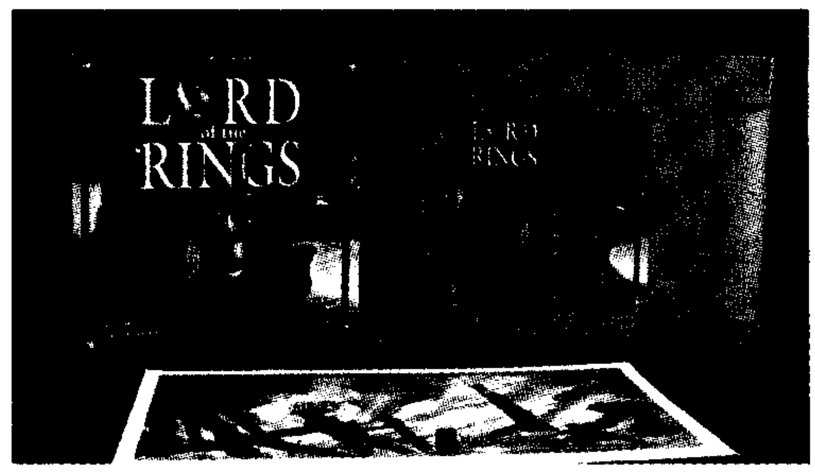

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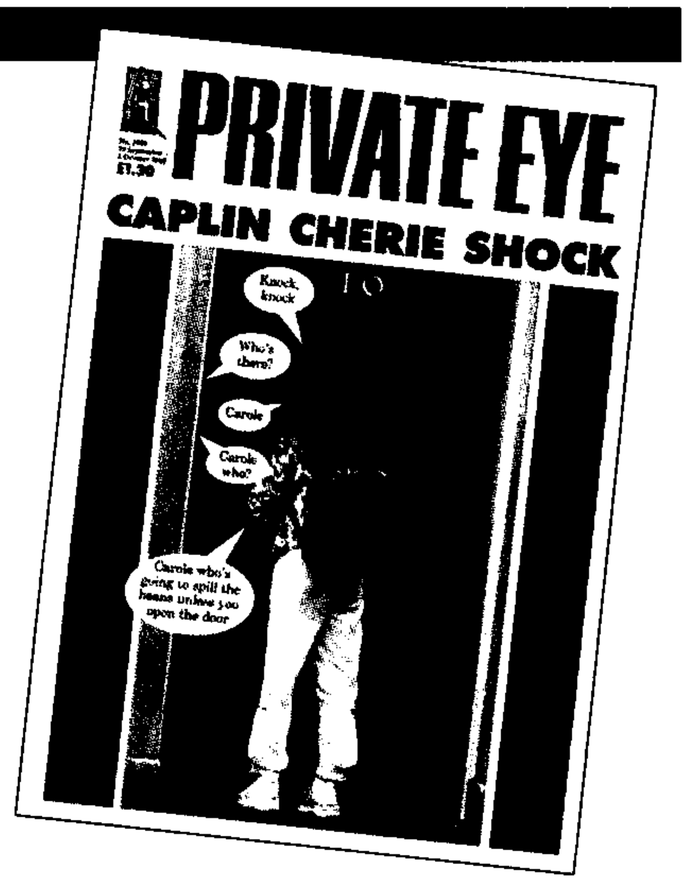

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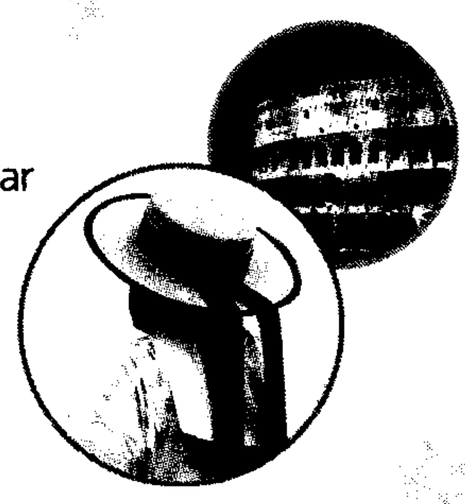

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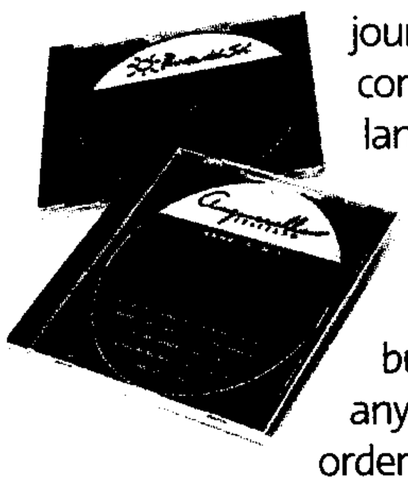

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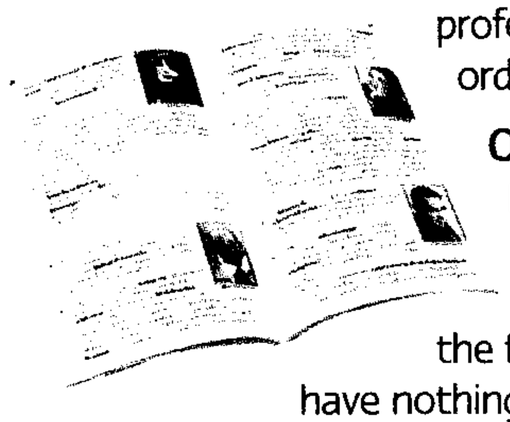

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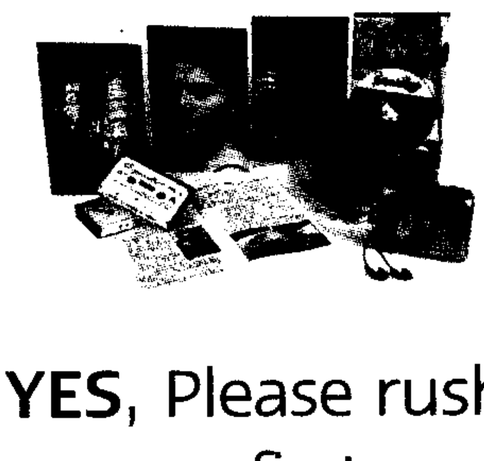

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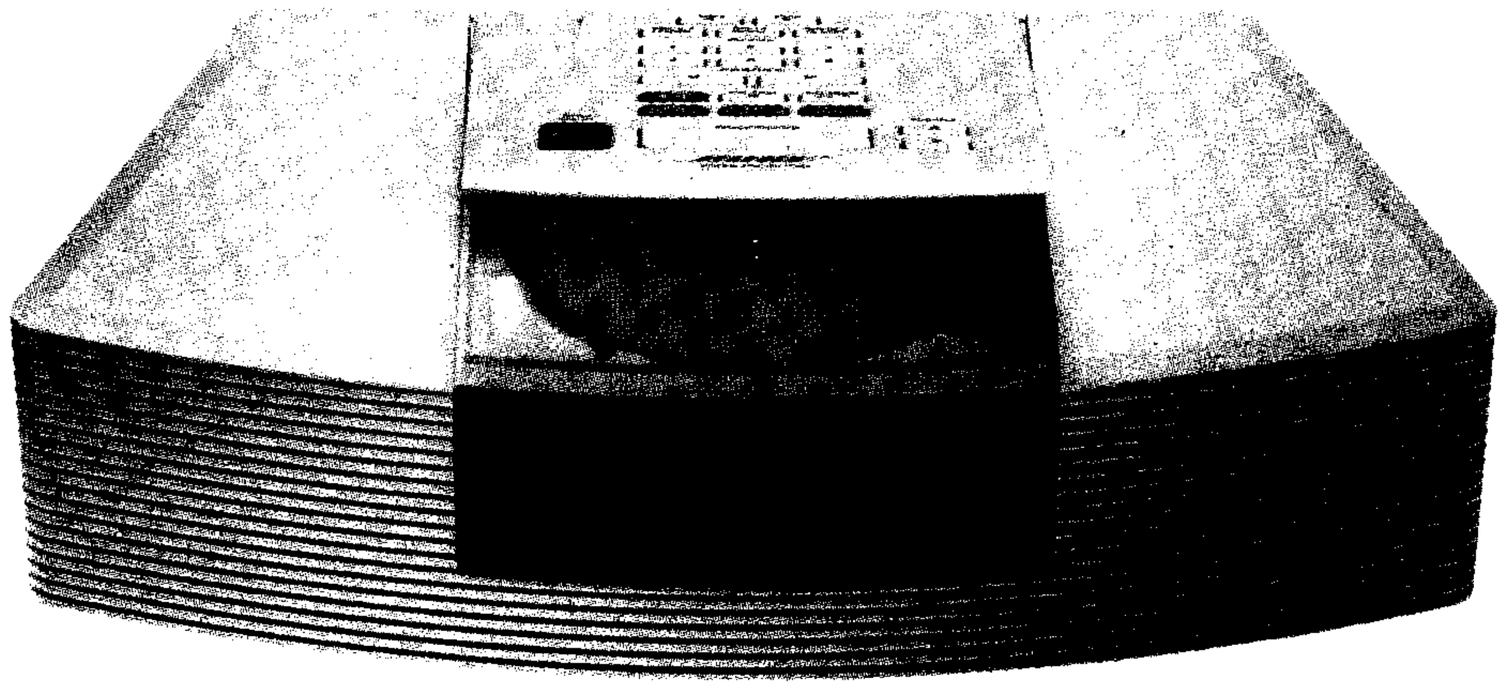

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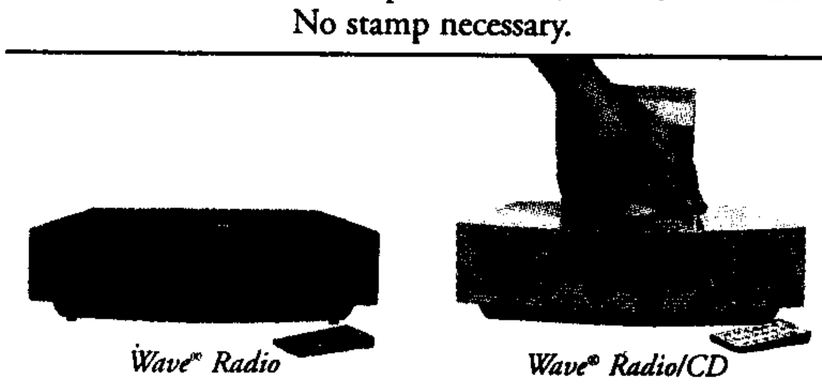

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